

WILD WEST



A MAGAZINE CONTAINING STORIES, SKETCHES Etc. OF WESTERN LIFE.

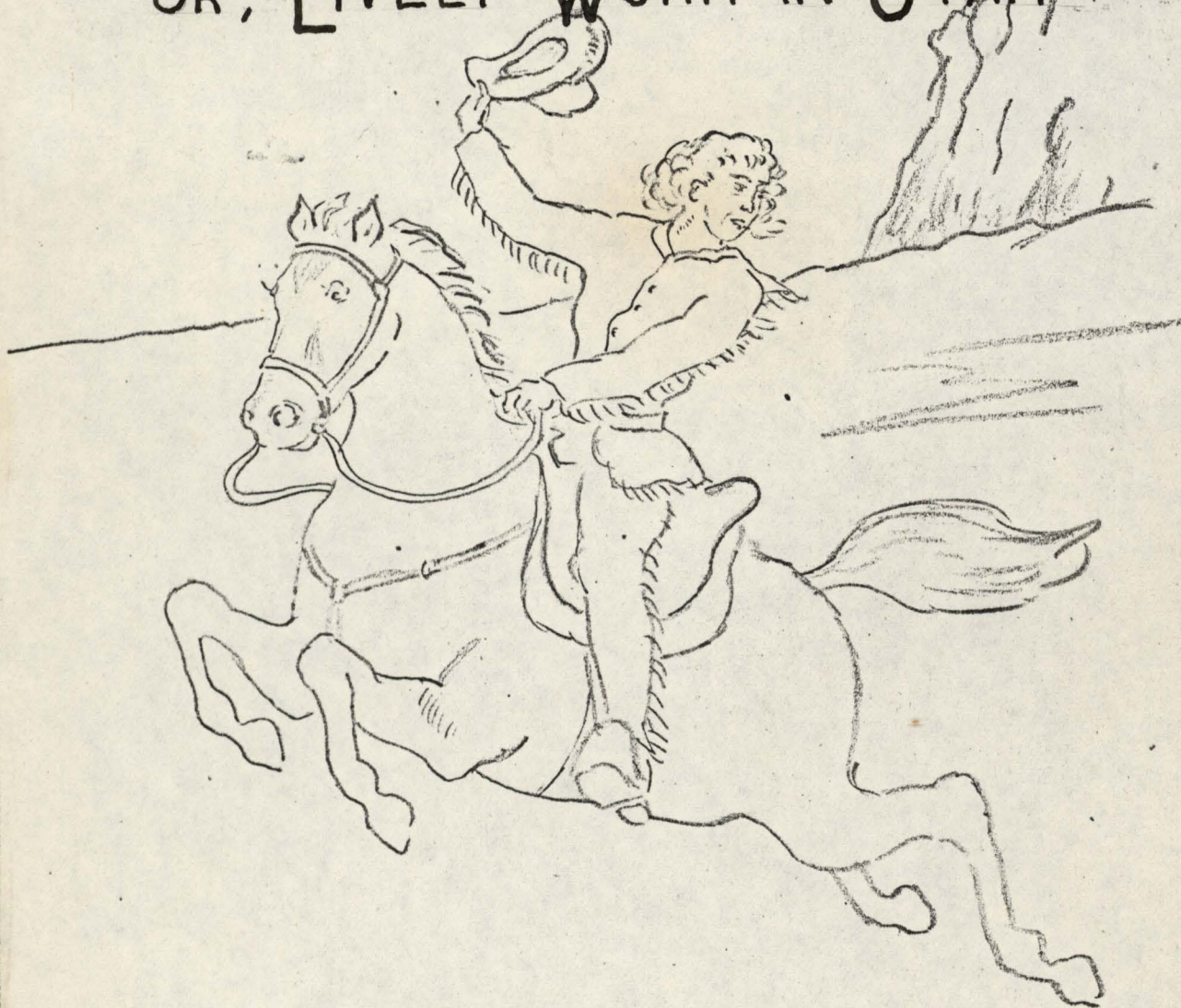
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YOUNG WILD WEST AND THE RAILROAD ROBBERS

OR, LIVELY WORK IN UTAH



WILD WEST WEEKLY

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Young Wild West and the Railroad Robbers

OR,

LIVELY WORK IN UTAH

By AN OLD SCOUT

CHAPTER I.

THE COMFORTABLE CAVE.

"I guess we'll have to go into camp, boys. It is beginning to get dark, and as there are no signs of a settlement anywhere about there is no need of getting soaked to the skin in this rain. We'll just hunt up a cave, for there ought to be lots of them around here, by the looks of things."

The speaker was a handsome, well-formed athletic boy of twenty.

He was attired in a hunting-suit of buckskin and armed with a rifle, brace of revolvers and a hunting-knife.

His long, chestnut hair hung over his shoulders, and, mounted on a clean-limbed sorrel stallion, he made a decidedly dashing appearance.

His remarks were addressed to a tall man with long, black hair and drooping mustache and a boy of about his own age.

The two were mounted on thoroughbred horses, and were dressed and armed about the same as the speaker.

It was near night in the mountains of northern Utah, and a drizzly rain had just begun to fall.

As it was in the month of November, it was naturally quite chilly in that part of the country.

But the three riders were gloved and warmly clad, so they did not mind that part of it.

It was the drizzly rain that they did not like, for they knew that it was more than likely that they would be thoroughly soaked before they found a habitation to put up at.

It was Young Wild West, the Prince of the Saddle and Champion Deadshot of the West, who spoke, and as he brought the sorrel stallion to a halt his two partners, Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart, followed suit.

Cheyenne Charlie was an ex-government scout and Indian fighter, who had been born and reared in the wild West, and who had seen and experienced many an adventure while in the company of the dashing young fellow who bore the name of Young Wild West.

And so it was with Jim Dart. He had known Wild, as he was called by his friends, for nearly three years, and since that time they had been chums.

While all three were interested in many mining ventures throughout the West, they had a hobby of traveling about looking for excitement and adventure.

Sometimes they were accompanied by the scout's wife and the sweethearts of the two boys, but they had come without them on this trip, because they had figured that it was going to be a dangerous one before they left Weston, in the Black Hills, which was the main headquarters of Young Wild West and his two partners.

About a week before we find them in the lonely spot in northern Utah, one of the officials of the Union Pacific Railroad had mysteriously disappeared from his home in Ogden, and as no trace could be found of him, a reward of five thousand dollars was offered by the company to any person who would locate him.

The man's name was Joseph W. Liddle, and besides being a very wealthy man, he was one of the highest of the officials—a man who had much to do with the business of the great railroad.

Young Wild West and his partners read about the case and decided to go and hunt up the missing man.

But since they had started out the reward had been increased from five thousand to ten thousand dollars.

This was worth working for, not to speak of the exciting times that were likely to be had while the search was going on.

As the reader now knows who the three were and what brought them to Utah, we will continue with the thread of our story.

"I reckon it's ther best thing we kin do, Wild," said Cheyenne Charlie, in reply to the remark Young Wild West made.

"Yes," spoke up Jim Dart, "it is going to be a bad night, I have an idea. If we can find a cave around here the best thing for us to do is to put up in it."

"Well, boys, if there isn't a cave around here I am a poor judge of the nature of the land. Why, there are nothing but rocks, crags and cliffs, and where they are caves are sure to be found. But come on; this rain isn't just to my liking. It is a cold rain, and the kind one feels more than any other."

He turned off to the left and followed a gully that ran between irregular hills that sloped up and off to a level above on either side.

Just then the whistle of a locomotive sounded in the distance.

"Hello!" exclaimed Young Wild West; "we are nearer the railroad than I had an idea for. But that doesn't say that we'll find a stopping-place very soon, though."

The sound of the whistle came from the south, and they figured that it must be easily two or three miles away.

They had not gone more than a hundred yards through the gully when they came upon just what they were looking for.

There was a dry and roomy cave at the foot of a frowning cliff, and as the mouth was in a direction opposite to that whence the wind was blowing, they knew they would be able to keep dry.

Just as they dismounted a savage growl came to their ears, and then out came a full-grown black bear!

The animal glared at them and showed its teeth and then hastened away.

Cheyenne Charlie would have shot the bear if it had not been that they already had two haunches of bear meat with them.

So long as the creature did not insist on attacking them and they did not have any use for the meat or skin, there was no need of slaying it.

The scout now took a look inside the cave.

There was nothing there to indicate that it was a regular den for bears, so he concluded that bruin had been coming along when the rain set in and had decided to make the cave his stopping-place for the night.

"I reckon everything is all right here," he said to Wild and Jim. "We're mighty lucky in findin' this cave, fur it's big enough fur our horses ter git in, an' there's plenty of room fur 'em here after they git in."

"And there is plenty of wood lying around that we can

make a fire with to take off the chill," added Jim Dart, as he started in to gather some of it up.

The three horses were at once led into the cave and relieved of their saddles.

Our friends had bought enough oats to last them a couple of days at the last place they had stopped at, so they had just enough left to make two meals for the horses.

Sometimes the animals went without oats for a long while.

But they were used to this, and made out very well on the succulent grasses that grew in the valleys.

A real Western horse will come pretty near to keeping fat if allowed to forage for himself, and the steeds ridden by Young Wild West and his partners had been through all stages of the game.

While Jim was busy kindling a fire at the mouth of the cave, using some dry leaves that had blown inside to start it with, Wild and Charlie were rubbing down the horses.

They soon got them in pretty good shape, though by the time they did it was about dark.

"Now, boys, I guess we'll get a little supper ready," said Young Wild West. "Charlie, you can show what you can do with some of your bear steaks."

"Well, I reckon I kin brile 'em so's they'll be full of juice," was the reply. "Give me a steak from a young bear every time!"

Jim Dart found water in a near-by brook, and he soon had their coffee-pot over the fire.

The scout soon rigged out a broiler with a forked stick, and, brushing aside the part of the burning wood that was smoking, he put the meat over the coals.

In a few minutes both the bear steaks and coffee were ready.

Then, with the aid of some rather hard biscuit they had with them in their saddlebags, they made quite a hearty meal.

The horses were in a fit condition to give the oats, so they let them have their supper, and when they had eaten it they were led down to the brook and allowed to drink.

"There!" said Jim Dart, when all this had been attended to; "now I guess we can take it easy for the night. While this cave isn't quite as comfortable as a hotel, it suits me good enough. A dry cave, a dry blanket and a full stomach are good things to be possessed of on a cold, stormy night in the mountains."

"An' a pipe an' some tobacker," added the scout, as he proceeded to light the pipe he had just filled.

"That's right, Charlie; but I seldom smoke a pipe, as you know. I could go a good cigar if I had it, though."

"We'll have to wait till we strike a town, boys," spoke up Young Wild West. "I could go forever without smoking without any trouble, but just now I do feel as though a cigar would be a sort of comfort."

"Gentlemen, allow me to treat you to cigars!"

The words came from the other side of the fire at the mouth of the cave.

Our three friends turned in surprise.

A tall man wearing a rubber coat and hat stepped before them.

"Quite comfortable you've got it here, I should say," he remarked. "All you need is the cigars, and I have got them."

"Come in, stranger," said Young Wild West, though he did not take any particular liking to the man from his looks. "Where is your horse?"

"Right out here," was the reply.

"Well, I guess there's room for one more. Fetch him in."

"I am glad to meet with such a good reception. I thought probably you might object to my sharing the cave for the night. I thank you, gentlemen."

He stepped back in the darkness and soon came forward again, leading his horse.

Young Wild West and his friends made room for him and then invited the stranger to remove his rubber coat and hat and make himself at home.

"Been ter supper?" Charlie asked him.

"Well, no," was the reply. "But I have got something to eat in my saddle-bags."

"Well, there's a cup of coffee left in ther pot, I reckon, an' if you're willin' ter wait I'll soon brile a piece of bear steak fur yer."

"I'll accept the coffee, but never mind the bear meat," retorted the stranger. "Bear meat is something, I am sorry to say, that I don't fancy."

Then he went to his saddle-bags and got out a couple of sandwiches.

Jim passed the coffee to him and he sat down and ate in silence.

Not until he had finished the last morsel did he speak. Then he rubbed his hands and looked up, exclaiming:

"Oh! I forgot about the cigars!"

Out came a cigar-case from an inner pocket, which our friends did not fail to notice was gold-plated and expensive in appearance.

There were six cigars in it, and he held it to each of the three.

Charlie allowed that he was smoking a pipe and did not need a cigar, but the stranger insisted, and he took one.

Then he calmly lighted one himself, and, looking at the three, said:

"I guess it is about time I told you who I was. You must excuse me for not doing so before. My name is Alonzo Leather, and I live in Ogden when I'm home. My friends usually call me Lon, for short."

"All right, Mr. Leather," retorted our hero. "My name is Young Wild West, and these gentlemen are my partners, Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart. We live in Weston, Dakota, when we are home, but that is very seldom."

"I guess I have read something about you and your pards, Mr. West," observed Lon Leather, looking at them curiously. "Your names have been in the Ogden and Salt

Lake papers several times in connection with some daring escapades."

"Well, I hope the papers did not print anything about us that was bad, or that we didn't do."

"You are called the Champion Deadshot of the West, I see," went on the man, not noticing what Wild said. "Is it a fact that you hold that title?"

"Well, yes. I have managed to win out over all I ever shot against in a match. But I don't care for the title. I don't go around looking for glory in that line."

"But it seems that you get glory enough, according to the papers."

"Well, maybe I do."

Just then the sharp clatter of hoofs rang out and all hands sprang to their feet and turned to the mouth of the cave.

CHAPTER II.

WILD RUNS INTO DANGER.

"It looks as though we're going to have more visitors, boys," said Young Wild West, looking at his partners.

"Well, I reckon we've got about all we kin accommodate," retorted Cheyenne Charlie, as he placed his hand on his revolver.

Lon Leather noticed his action.

"You don't think those who are coming might be enemies, do you?" he asked.

"Yer can't never tell, boss," was the reply. "It's best ter always be on ther lookout fur bad galoots in these parts, yer know."

"A good idea, but I hardly think there is any danger that those who are coming are bad fellows."

Charlie looked at him sharply, but made no reply.

Just then seven horsemen galloped up to the mouth of the cave and came to a halt.

"Hello, there!" called out one of them. "Got room fur us ter come in out of ther wet?"

"I guess so," promptly answered Lon Leather, before Wild or his partners could get a word out.

"I guess not!" added Wild, in a ringing tone. "We are full, and there is no room for any more guests here. You'll have to look further, my friends."

"I reckon you don't mean that, young feller," said the horseman, who had saluted them and made the query. "You ain't goin' ter turn away seven men who are putty nigh soaked ter ther skin when you've got a good dry place there that's big enough fur us all?"

As he said this he dismounted, and then his followers did likewise.

"I am only a guest here, gentlemen," remarked Leather, stepping out so the strangers could see him. "If Young Wild West says y can't share the cave with us I suppose it will have to be that way."

"I don't know about that," was the quick retort. "That

cave is big enough fur us all, as I jest said; an' I reckon we've got as much right to it as anyone else. We're goin' ter stop here, an' if anyone there don't like it they kin do ther other thing."

"What is the other thing?" asked Wild, coolly.

"Git out!" was the reply.

"Well, I guess we won't do that. It will take a bigger lot of scoundrels than you are to make us get out. Now you take my advice and get away from here as quick as possible. If you don't something might happen that you won't like. Mr. Lon Leather, you go with them, please!"

"What!" gasped Leather.

"I mean just what I say! I just saw you exchanging glances with that ugly-looking galoot there, and I also heard you say something a little while ago that makes me think that you knew this gang was coming here. Just take what belongs to you and be sure that you don't pick up anything else and light out!"

"But this is an outrage!" persisted the man.

Young Wild West and his partners now had revolvers in their hands.

Wild was covering the spokesman of the party and Charlie and Jim were ready to shoot the first man who made a move to draw his gun.

Lon Leather looked at them and saw that they meant business.

"This is what I call rough," he said, addressing the men outside. "Are you fellows going to stand this sort of treatment?"

"If the whole gang of you are not out of my sight in just two minutes I will show you how straight I can shoot!" exclaimed Wild.

He stood there as cool as though he was simply talking over some trifling matter.

Young Wild West had made no mistake when he put down Lon Leather as being a scoundrel.

He had thought so from the start, but he was not the one to refuse him shelter when it might be that he had made a mistake in his opinion of him.

Suddenly Leather made a grab for his revolver.

He succeeded in getting it from the holster and then—

Crack!

Wild fired as quick as a wink.

The man dropped the weapon as though he had received an electric shock.

The bullet had hit the barrel and knocked it from his hand.

"I could have sent that bullet through your heart," said the dashing young deadshot, "but I took pity on you. Now, get that horse out of the cave in a hurry. If I see the least part of any of you scoundrels before me in one minute from now I am going to shoot again!"

The seven men standing outside in the rain were completely awed by the quick, sure shot that the boy had fired.

When they saw Lon Leather throw the saddle on the

back of his horse and then hurriedly lead him out in the rain they lost no time in mounting.

"You will give me time to buckle my saddle-girths, won't you?" called out Leather, his face, which was as pale as a sheet, turned toward our friends.

"In just one minute from the time I spoke I am going to shoot!" replied the Prince of the Saddle.

Lon Leather hurriedly led his horse away from the light of the fire.

He had not even had time to put on his rubber coat and hat, but carried them with him as he went along with the horse.

As the villains disappeared from view our hero quickly picked up his rifle and dropped upon his knee at the mouth of the cave.

Jim and Charlie quickly did the same.

Then the report of a rifle rang out and a bullet flattened against the face of the cliff near where Wild's head was.

His Winchester went to his shoulder.

Cra-ang!

The vibrating report of the weapon sounded in the cave and a yell of pain came from out of the darkness.

"I took chances on that shot," said the boy, calmly. "I knew just about where the fellow must be who fired. Well, let them keep it up. There is nothing like having a lively time of it. I thought we were going to have a dull evening of it, but I was mistaken."

Though they crouched low and waited patiently for some little time, nothing further was heard from the men they had driven from the cave.

"I reckon they got enough," observed the scout, as he moved over and took a seat where he could not be seen from the outside, though he was in full glow of the fire.

"I guess you are right, Charlie," answered Wild. "Well, if they are satisfied we ought to be, I suppose."

"Providing they mean to let us alone," spoke up Dart.

More wood was placed upon the fire, and then Wild and Charlie lay down on their blankets, leaving Jim to stand the first watch.

They meant to keep a watch, anyhow, so the fact that they had been disturbed by a gang of ruffians did not make them any more cautious.

The long night passed, the drizzling rain continuing to come down until daylight.

Then it gradually ceased, and as our friends were eating their breakfast the sun showed itself.

"This is better," remarked our hero. "Now to get to some place where we can get some information concerning the disappearance of Joseph W. Liddle. We want that reward, boys."

"It may be that the mystery of his disappearance has been solved by this time," spoke up Jim.

"That's true; but I hardly think so. If he is dead it will never be known what became of him; and if he was simply spirited away by a gang of villains the chances are

that they will keep him long enough to make some money out of it."

"I reckon that's about ther size of it," nodded the scout.

The horses had been given their feed the first thing after our friends arose, and as soon as they had done eating they were ready to start out.

"Which way, Wild?" asked the scout.

"For the railroad track," was the reply. "I guess that will be the nearest way to get to civilization."

"I reckon so."

They mounted their horses and rode out of the gully.

They had not gone far when they came upon a trail that led in the very direction they wanted to go.

"Now, then," observed our hero, "we must be on the lookout for those fellows we had the trouble with last night. It may be that they are not so very far away. That they will be looking for satisfaction goes without saying. I winged one of them when I fired last night, and if he did not get it very bad it will be enough to make him and his companions seek satisfaction. They are a bad lot, I guess—the first gang of their kind we have come across since we left Weston."

"There are eight of them, counting the man who called himself Lon Leather," said Jim. "But I guess the three of us are enough for them to-day if we were last night."

"We will try and keep up our reputation, Jim," retorted Young Wild West, with a smile.

As the trail was a pretty smooth one, they let the horses go at a canter.

In this way the ground was soon covered, and in a few minutes they reached a slight elevation and could see the glistening rails of the Union Pacific in the distance.

But it was merely a branch of the great road that ran north from Ogden into Idaho.

It was but a single track, too, for at the time of which we write the railroads throughout the great West were not so fully equipped as they are now.

Our three friends rode on and soon reached the track.

Then they brought their horses to a halt and looked up and down it.

Suddenly they saw a big black bear come out of the woods and start to cross the track.

The animal was about two hundred yards away and did not see them.

Just as the bear got over the rails the report of a rifle sounded and the huge beast staggered forward and fell.

"Get back here, boys!" exclaimed Young Wild West, backing his horse behind a mass of rock that reared itself upward near the railroad track. "There is no use in letting the fellow who fired and shot the bear see us."

They got out of sight in less than a second.

Then the daring young deadshot dismounted and told his partners to do likewise.

"Stay right here, boys! I am going to see who it was that brought the bear down so neatly."

Charlie and Jim nodded.

Wild crept to the edge of the rocky wall and peered down the track.

He was just in time to see three men step down from a bank and approach the carcass of the bear.

There was nothing strange in this, but when he recognized one of them as Lon Leather he gave a low whistle of astonishment.

He stepped back and looked around him.

"Did you see anyone, Wild?" Jim asked.

"Yes, Lon Leather and two other men are down the track. They are going to skin the bear, I guess. I think I will go around there on foot and find out what sort of a gang they are, anyhow. It might be that I can learn something about the mysterious disappearance of the railroad official by doing so. It would be just such a gang as they are that would be apt to do a thing of that kind."

"That's right!" exclaimed Cheyenne Charlie.

"Well, you stay here with the horses. I can get up the hill there and get close enough to hear what they are talking about, I am pretty certain."

The next minute our hero was ascending the hill he had spoken of.

The distance to the spot where the three men and the dead bear were was not more than two hundred yards, and he moved along cautiously through the bushes and dwarfed oaks that grew on the mountain-side.

He was soon close enough to the spot to hear voices.

Then he found that just above the railroad in a little hollow that was back of the high embankment there were others besides the three he had seen.

But this was to be expected, since he had an idea that the whole gang that had sought admission to the cave the night before were there.

He crept a little nearer and saw three standing on the ground in charge of eight horses.

"That makes six of the eight," he muttered under his breath. "The other two must have gone down by the ones I saw first. Hello! one of them has a bandage around his head. I must have grazed him with the shot I fired in the darkness last night. He is the fellow who had the close call, eh? No wonder he let out a yell!"

Wishing to get a look at those beside the track below the bank, he crept softly forward.

He had just reached a point where he could see below when a startling thing happened.

A man pounced upon him from behind and threw him flat on his stomach.

Then another leaped forward and pressed a cocked revolver against his forehead.

"Make ther least noise an' you'll die, Young Wild West!" a voice hissed in his ear.

CHAPTER III.

YOUNG WILD WEST'S NARROW ESCAPE.

Wild had been caught foul.

There was no question about that.

He had not been possessed of the least idea that anyone was watching him when he made his way to the spot where the villains were gathered.

When he heard what was said and felt the muzzle of a revolver pressed against his head, Wild realized that there was only one thing to do, and that was to remain silent.

He was pinned to the ground so he could not use his hands by the man who had forced him down, and there he was at the mercy of the two villains.

The fellow who held the revolver at his head quickly relieved him of his weapons.

"Hello, Captain Lon!" called one of them, in a low voice.

But it was loud enough to reach the ears of those below at the side of the railroad track.

"What is it?" came the quick reply from the man who had been the temporary guest of our friends the night before.

"We've got someone here that you said you'd give a good deal to have."

"What!"

"That's right. We've got Young Wild West."

"The dickens you say!"

Leather ran up the bank with the greatest ease, for he was an athletic fellow, and he reached the scene just as the three men came running up from the hollow.

"Great Scott!" he exclaimed; "how in thunder did you make the capture, boys?"

"Oh, we was lookin' around ter see if there wasn't another bear close by, when all of a sudden we seen this young galoot crawlin' this way," answered the man who was holding Wild down. "When we seen it was ther fellow what you said was named Young Wild West, ther Champeen Deadshot of ther West, we allowed that we'd do a mighty fine thing if we was ter catch him."

"And you have, boys! You've done one of the best tricks you ever did in your lives. I know considerable about this young fellow, and I'll wager that he came to this part of the country just for the purpose of making trouble for us. He has the record of going about the country and breaking up bands of outlaws, road agents and the like. But I guess when he stacks up against the railroad robbers he gets to the limit."

"So you call yourselves the railroad robbers, eh?" asked Wild, speaking in a voice that was remarkable for its steadiness.

"That is just what we claim to be," replied Lon Leather. "Just tie his hands behind him, boys. I guess we can finish him the same time we wreck the train. He is a dangerous character! He would send us all to prison or the gallows if he got the chance."

Wild had now recovered himself, as far as his wonderful coolness was concerned.

Many a time had he been in just such situations, and never had he lost his nerve.

His hands were bound behind his back, and then at a

word from the leader of the gang he was picked up bodily and carried down into the hollow behind the bank.

Captain Lon, as the men called him, took out his watch.

"The train is due to pass here in just fifteen minutes, boys," he said. "Come! We haven't much time to lose. We will tie Young Wild West right close to the spot where we put the dynamite. Then when the forward truck-wheel of the locomotive hits the dynamite the explosion will do a double duty. It will not only wreck the train, but it will send Young Wild West into eternity at the same time. The express car will be right next to the engine, and it is likely that it will be a complete wreck. We can get the mailbags and the money in a hurry, because we know just where they will be, and then we can be off."

Wild turned a shade paler when he heard this.

The villain spoke just as though it was nothing of importance at all to kill a whole lot of innocent people.

The dashing young deadshot really felt more for those on the train than he did for himself at that moment.

The railroad robbers had a veritable fiend for a leader in the person of Lon Leather.

The villains did not wait long in the hollow.

"Cut off the haunches of the bear," said the captain to the men near the track; "never mind the skin."

They did as directed.

"Now throw the prisoner over my horse and come on."

Wild was lifted upon the horse, a pistol being held close to his head as it was done.

"One little cry from you means that you will die!" said Leather. "I am of the opinion that you are one of the sort who desires to live as long as he can, so you will most likely do as you are told."

Wild said nothing.

He could tell by the scoundrel's words that he would not hesitate to kill him.

The band of eight now rode along through a grove until they came to a curve of the railroad, about a quarter of a mile from the spot where Wild had been captured.

Then they came to a halt and dismounted.

"You have the dynamite, all right, haven't you, Dudley?"

"Yes," replied the man, who appeared to be a little anxious about something.

"Get down there and tie it to one of the rails, then. It will be a relief to you when you get rid of it, I have no doubt."

"That's right, Cap," replied the man. "I've been mighty careful with ther stuff, 'cause I was afraid it might go off."

Dudley went down the bank, and right before the eyes of our hero and his captors tied an oblong package to one of the rails.

Right beside the track at that point was a boulder, and behind it was a portion of a dead tree that had been cut down.

When the captain looked at the log he nodded in a pleased way.

"Lean that log against the boulder and then tie the prisoner securely to it," he said, coldly.

"All right, Cap."

Two of them dragged Wild down to the track, while a third kept a pistol to his head. "If he utters a yell shoot him!" was the order. "We are not going to be cheated out of him now. His partners are around somewhere, and they might appear in time to do some damage to us. Young Wild West has got to die, and there is no power on earth that will save him now. Hurry up, boys! If the train is on time she will be here in another minute. I made a mistake when I looked at my watch before."

Just then the whistle of a locomotive sounded in the distance.

The train was coming.

Wild was now as white as a sheet.

But he did not plead with the scoundrels, knowing that it would be useless.

In a remarkably quick time he was tied to the log.

Directly before him, and within four feet of him, was the dynamite tied to the rail.

And the rumble of the approaching train could be heard.

"Scatter, boys!" exclaimed Captain Leather. "Half on this side and half on the other, so we can be ready to make a rush for the express car after the explosion takes place. Now! Light out for your lives!"

The train shot into view around the curve and the robbers ran for their lives, leaving Young Wild West to his fate.

Wild knew that the engine would strike the dynamite in another moment unless almost a miracle occurred.

But just as the last of the railroad robbers disappeared from his view an agile form darted from behind the very boulder the log leaned against.

It was Jim Dart!

Our hero saw the flash of a knife and then the train whizzed by.

He was saved!

"I knew I could do it, Wild," said the voice of Jim, as our hero's bonds were cut. "I dared not act before, for fear I would not have got a chance to get the dynamite off the track. If we had opened fire on the villains it would have been the means of saving you. We figured it out quickly, and decided that I was to wait until the men left and then dart out and cut the dynamite from the rail. But come! The villains will be upon us in a hurry if we stay here!"

Wild did not think of asking any questions.

His own weapons were quickly placed in his hands, and then a tug at the sleeve of his coat made him follow his rescuer.

Up the bank they dashed just as a yell of rage sounded on the air.

Cra-ang!

The report of a rifle sounded and a bullet whistled by

them, coming so close to them that they could fairly feel the wind of it.

Cra-ang!

Another shot sounded from a point nearly straight ahead of them, and then a yell rang out from the other side of the track.

In less than two seconds later Wild and Jim were in the cover of the trees right near the spot where our hero had been captured.

Then Cheyenne Charlie came to meet them.

The scout seized the young deadshot and gave him a hug.

"I thought you was a goner, Wild," he said.

"Well, I'll admit that I thought the same way, Charlie," was the reply. "But Jim was in time."

"Well, we only had about five minutes ter make up our minds what ter do. You see, we took a notion ter strike out an' look fur yer a little while after you was gone. We got in sight of ther sneakin' galoots jest as they was tyin' ther dynamite ter ther rail. We didn't know what it was at first, but when we heard that feller Lon Leather say that you'd be blowed ter pieces an' ther train wrecked at ther same time, we knowed it must be dynamite, or nitro-glycerine, or somethin' like that."

"And then we decided that I was to creep down as close as I could get and cut the explosive stuff from the rail and let the train go by," added Jim. "The train was coming when I started to get down behind the rock, but the villains were so intent on their fiendish work that they did not look my way at all. If they had it would have been all up with you."

"What did you do with the dynamite, Jim?" asked Wild.

"I laid it on top of the boulder. There it is! You can see it from here."

"Ah! I see it."

Our hero could see the oblong stick with some of the cords still clinging to it.

"I guess we had better get that dangerous explosive out of the way," he observed, dropping on his knee behind a tree and raising his rifle to his shoulder.

Charlie and Jim knew what he was going to do.

They also were aware of the fact that some of the railroad robbers were not very far from the boulder.

Wild took quick aim and pressed the trigger.

Boom-m-m!

The report of the rifle was drowned in a crashing roar.

A lurid flame spread out around the boulder and a shower of dirt and stones leaped high into the air.

As the noise of the explosion died out yells of fear could be heard, and then our friends caught sight of three men running up the hill on the other side of the track.

"I guess that gave them a scare that they won't forget very soon," observed our hero.

Then, only pausing long enough to make sure that the track had not been obstructed by any pieces of rock from

the explosion, he led the way for the spot where they had left their horses.

They reached them without hearing anything of the villainous band, and, mounting them, rode away from the spot.

Not until then did Wild tell his partners how he came to be caught by the men.

"It was a mighty good thing that we decided to follow you," said Jim. "You told us to stay there with the horses, but we both got it in our heads that we had better sneak up after you and see what was going on. I am glad we did."

"So am I, boys," answered the boy, fervently. "That was a narrow escape, if I ever did have one in my life."

"So ther galoots calls themselves ther railroad robbers, do they?" remarked the scout, after a pause.

"Yes," answered our hero. "Lon Leather took pains to impress it on my mind, too. Do you know what I think?"

"What?"

"That this gang of eight know something about the disappearance of Joseph W. Liddle, the railroad official."

"I wouldn't be surprised," nodded the scout.

"Nor I, either, Wild," Jim hastened to say.

"It would take just such a gang as that to do a thing of that kind."

His partners admitted this.

"Now we will ride on until we come to some sort of a town, and then we will try and learn something about this mysterious disappearance."

"We're bound ter strike some kind of a place if we follow ther blamed old railroad track," said the scout.

He was right, for within ten miles of the spot where Wild met with such a narrow escape they came upon a little settlement.

CHAPTER IV.

"JIG WATER" OR "ROSEVILLE."

It was not much of a town that our friends had arrived at.

There were not more than twenty or thirty buildings in it, and most of them were of the shanty type.

Really the best-looking building of the lot was the little railroad station.

As the three rode up to this structure they found quite a crowd of rough-looking men and a few women and children gathered on the platform and around the station.

Three men wearing overalls and supplied with carpenter's tools were busy arguing with a tall, lanky man, who seemed to be a leader of the crowd that had gathered.

Our friends dismounted.

"What is the trouble?" Wild asked of one of the men.

"Why, ther blamed old railroad company wants ter change ther name of this town," was the reply. "You're

jest in time! We're goin' ter put it to a vote, an' I reckon you kin have a say in this thing."

"What is the name the place has always went by?"

"Jig Water," was the prompt reply. "That's ther name of ther town, an' that's a good enough name, I reckon. Ther company has sent them three galoots up here with that sign over there ter put up on ther station. What do yer think of it?"

Wild and his partners stepped a little nearer and saw a neatly-painted sign lying on the platform.

"Roseville" was the name it bore.

Cheyenne Charlie looked around at the little settlement and grinned.

"Where in thunder does ther roses come in?" he asked.

"That's jest it," said the man. "This is a healthy old town ter be stung with a name like that, ain't it? I tell yer Jig Water is a good enough name fur it."

"I think so, too, pard."

"Hooray!" yelled the citizen, waving his hat. "Come here, Lige Becker! Here's three strangers what's jest arrove, an' I reckon they think ther name ther town's got now is good enough fur it."

"Good enough!" and the next minute the tall, lanky man came over to them.

He promptly shook hands with them.

Then he turned and pointed at the sign.

"What do yer think of that?" he asked.

"Well, I don't know as we have got any right to express our opinion," answered our hero.

"Yes, yer have. My name is Lige Becker, an' ther folks has voted fur me ter be ther galoot ter lead ther movement ag'in changin' ther name of our place. I says you've got a right ter express your opinions, so go ahead an' do it."

"Well, if that is the case I'll tell you what I think about it. I think the original name of the place is good enough."

"Hooray!" yelled those who heard this.

"But why don't you put it to a vote and decide it that way?" went on our hero. "The mere fact of the railroad company putting up that sign won't change it, anyhow. Get the sentiment of the crowd, and then maybe the men won't put it up until they have consulted their superiors."

"That's it! That's it!" came from the men in the crowd, while the shrill voices of the women joined in approvingly.

Wild did not know how many were in favor of it, but he was amused at the situation, and was anxious to see it settled.

The three workmen now put down their tools and leaned against the rail of the platform.

They appeared just a little uneasy.

Lige Becker got upon a box and held up his hand for silence.

"Ladies an' gents," he said, in a voice that was loud enough to be heard by everyone in sight, "I've been appointed as ther one ter make ther protest ag'in changin'

ther name of our village. I've asked these three railroad men not ter put up that sign, an' they say they will have ter do as they was told or lose their jobs. Now there's some of yer who like ther high-soundin' name of Roseville, especially ther wimmen folks. But ther real old settlers think Jig Water is a good enough name. Some of us have lived here fur years, an' if ther name has been good enough that long it's good enough now. But, on ther advice of this young feller here," pointing to Wild, "I'm goin' ter ask yer fur yer sentiments in regards to ther problem afore us. Now, then, all them what's in favor of keepin' ther name of Jig Water ter ther town will say aye."

"Aye!" came from nearly all the males in the crowd, Cheyenne Charlie joining in with them.

"All them what wants ther foolish, high-soundin' name of Roseville will say aye."

"Aye!" came from the women and a few of the men.

"Jig Water wins!" shouted the lanky man. "Ther old name will stay."

Then he jumped down from the box and hurried over to the three workmen.

"When ther train comes along at twelve o'clock yer kin jest take that sign back ter Ogden an' tell them what sent yer here with it that we'll put up our own sign on this here station, or else there won't none go up, d'ye understand?"

"All right," replied one of them. "We don't propose to get in trouble over it, so we will do jest as you say."

"Good enough! Now, everybody jine in an' give three cheers fur Jig Water!"

It was certainly a rousing cheer that went up.

The sentiment was strong for keeping the old name.

Wild could not help laughing at the curious proceeding.

The three carpenters went to work at some other things they had been sent to do about the station, but left the sign lie right where it was.

In a few minutes the crowd had dispersed.

Then our friends walked around the building and soon paused before a poster that was put up in a conspicuous place.

It was the offer of ten thousand dollars reward for the finding of Joseph W. Liddle, the railroad official.

Our hero called Lige Becker over to him and said:

"They haven't found the missing man yet, eh?"

"No," was the reply. "He's been gone over a week now, an' there's men scourin' ther country fur him. There's some what allows that Liddle is held by a gang not far from these diggin's, but I don't put much stock in it."

"Well, do you know if there is a gang in these parts that would be apt to do a thing of that kind?"

"Well, there's a gang of railroad robbers that has got in their work a couple of times between here an' Ogden. It might be them what's at ther bottom of it, but they're too foxy ter be caught, it seems."

"Has anyone seen them in these parts?"

"There's them what says they have."

Wild was now more of the opinion than ever that Lon Leather and his gang were responsible for the disappearance of the railroad official. "Boys, I guess we will stay right here in this town for the rest of the day, and probably till to-morrow morning," he said, as they mounted their horses and rode over toward a ramshackle building that purported to be a tavern by the sign it bore.

"I reckon it won't hurt ter stay here awhile," Charlie retorted.

They found they could be accommodated at the tavern, so they had their horses put away and prepared to take things easy for a time.

Wild wondered why it was that the engineer had not stopped the train when he saw him tied to the log at the side of the track.

He must have surely seen Jim cut the dynamite stick loose from the rail, too.

But the train had gone right on.

"It must be that he was afraid the robbers would get in their work if he stopped," he said.

"That's most likely it, especially as the trains have been held up a couple of times before, according to what Lige Becker says," remarked Dart.

About a dozen of the settlers of Jig Water were gathered at the bar of the tavern when our friends came in, after having put away their horses.

Among them was Lige Becker, the head of the committee that had objected to having the name of the settlement changed.

"Young feller," said he, "I want ter shake hands with yer."

He stepped over to Wild as he spoke.

"All right," was the retort.

"What's your name, if I ain't too inquisitive?"

"Young Wild West."

"Is that so? I reckon I heard somethin' about yer."

"Probably, but I hope nothing bad."

"Yer kin jist bet it ain't nothin' bad what I've heard about yer. It's all good what I've heard. An' these two fellers is your pards what goes around with yer straightenin' out crooked things, I s'pose?"

"Yes, you've got that right, Mr. Becker."

"Don't mister me; jist call me Lige; everyone does what's a friend ter me, yer know."

"All right, Lige."

The man laughed good-naturedly.

"I'll jist shake hands with yer pards, if they doesn't object."

"We never objects ter shakin' hands with a good, straight man," said Charlie, as he gave him a hearty grip.

"You fellers are around these here diggin's fur some purpose, I reckon?" resumed the lanky man, looking at Wild sharply.

"Well, I don't know about that," was the evasive rejoinder.

"Well, I think so, anyhow. But it are none of my busi-

ness. I do hope you'll stay till this thing about changin' ther name of ther town is settled, though."

"Why, don't you think it is settled yet?"

"As fur as we're consarned it is, but ther railroad people won't have it our way, not if they kin help it. But I'll jest tell yer one thing, an' that ain't two! If them railroad galoots goes an' puts up that Roseville sign we'll jest shoot it so full of holes that no one will be able ter read it!"

"An' then yer want ter have another sign ready ter put up," suggested the scout.

"By jingo! That's right. Boys, go an' git a sign made right away. There's Dave Coop, what's a putty good carpenter, an' he ain't doin' nothin' now. An' there's Jim Digger what's jest been paintin' his wagon with red paint! He must have some of ther paint over. We kin buy a little white paint down at ther store, an' we'll make a red an' white sign that everybody kin read with pleasure. Hooray fur Jig Water!"

The cheering was loud and long.

Charlie was very much interested in the fight between the railroad and the settlement.

He offered to help them fix up the sign, and it finally fell to him to do the painting.

Wild did not raise the least objections.

"Go ahead," he said, when the scout looked at him.

"All right. But I'd like you ter draw out ther letters on paper, so I kin cut 'em out an' use 'em fur a pattern on ther sign. I kin stick ther paper letters on with pins an' then trace along ther edges with a pencil. Then it'll be easy enough ter fill 'em in with ther paint. A red sign with white letters! That'll be ther thing!"

He went off with the men, and by noon they came back to the tavern with quite a decent-looking sign that the village carpenter had made.

It was a trifle larger than the one that lay on the station platform, but that was all the better, so the man declared.

Wild made patterns of the letters for the scout, and then, with the assistance of a man handy with a brush, he started in.

By night the sign was completed.

It was pronounced a dandy by everyone interested.

And the fact was, it did show up pretty well.

"Another coat of ther white on ther letters an' it'll be a regular Jim Hickey!" Charlie declared.

"That kin be put on at any time," said Lige Becker.

The three railroad carpenters had taken the sign and gone back to Ogden, so there was not likely to be any further developments until the following morning, when there was a train due to stop there.

This train would be the same one that had narrowly missed being wrecked by dynamite that morning.

The sign was placed on exhibition in the bar-room of the tavern, and it is safe to say that the proprietor of the place did a good business.

Just as our hero and his partners were thinking of re-

tiring for the night two strangers rode up to the door and dismounted.

Both of them were bearded and rather roughly dressed.

But there was something about one of them that attracted Wild's attention.

"I've seen that fellow before," he said to Charlie and Jim. "I think he is worth watchin'."

"All right; we'll watch ther pair of 'em," answered the scout. "We won't go ter bed jest yet. It ain't quite ten o'clock, anyhow."

The two strangers seemed to have plenty of money, and they spent it regardless.

Lige Becker and his friends had been drinking pretty freely all day, and they began to get "filled up with tanglefoot," as one of them put it.

After awhile one of the strangers got a little ugly, and the result was that a fight started.

Then the fellow Wild was suspicious of pulled off his coat and exclaimed:

"I can lick any man in the house, and I am ready to do it!"

CHAPTER V.

THE CAPTURE AND ESCAPE OF CAPTAIN LON LEATHER.

Young Wild West could not help noticing that the man was looking straight at him when he pulled off his coat and issued the startling challenge.

The crowd of men who had been celebrating the decision in regard to the name of the town and the making and painting of the sign looked aghast.

They were a rough-and-ready set, for the most part, but not one of them had thought of picking a fight until one of the strangers had shown himself so ugly.

The fellow who had started the fight with one of the drunken men now got up, after besting his man, and had his hand on the butt of a revolver.

Other revolvers were drawn in a twinkling.

"Hold on, men!" cried Young Wild West, stepping to the center of the room and raising his hand. "I guess these two fellows came here looking for trouble. Just keep your shooters in your belts, I will accept the tall fellow's challenge, and if the other one interferes my partners will take care of him. Just take it easy a few minutes, and I will show you how easy it is to knock spots out of a big bluffer. He says he can whip any man in the house. I am only a boy, but I honestly believe that he isn't able to whip one side of me."

The men took heed to what the daring young deadshot said.

They relinquished their hold of their six-shooters and the mussy stranger did the same.

The latter looked exceedingly annoyed and cast a glance at the door.

"Don't yer try ter sneak out, you miserable slab-sided

galoot!" cried Cheyenne Charlie, divining the fellow's thoughts. "You come in here an' started a row; now you're goin' ter git all that's comin' ter yer!"

The man addressed walked over and leaned against the bar.

"The man I hit called me a liar," he said. "I couldn't stand that."

"But what did you call me first?" cried the fellow who had got the worst of the argument. "I'm goin' ter let a streak of daylight through yer fur hittin' me when I wasn't lookin'!"

"Hold on!" said Wild, sternly.

At this a couple of the man's friends caught hold of him and succeeded in leading him away.

"Now, then," said our hero, looking the challenger in the eyes, "you and I will have it out. I guess I am the one you are after."

"If you think so, all right, young fellow."

He spoke in a different tone of voice than he had been using, and Cheyenne Charlie gave a start and exclaimed:

"Wild, it talks like ther galoot what——"

Our hero cut him short.

"I have an idea who it is, Charlie," he answered. "I knew I had seen him before."

With that he darted at the man and succeeded in landing a blow in the pit of his stomach.

It was done so sudden that the stranger could not ward off the blow, and as he fell back our hero seized his whiskers with his left hand and gave a jerk on them.

To the astonishment of all hands the beard came off!

And then the face of Lon Leather was disclosed.

Biff!

Wild hit him again and knocked him to the floor.

The very moment they recognized him Charlie and Jim leaped forward and caught the other fellow.

Jim tore a false beard from his face and found him to be the villain who had tied the dynamite to the railroad track.

"They're two of ther railroad robbers!" the scout cried. "Tie 'em up, boys!"

In spite of the fact that they had been treated so lavishly by the two strangers, they were a willing crowd.

In less than a minute the two were struggling in the grasp of the excited inmates of the room.

"Gentlemen," said Wild, when they had been subdued and bound, "my partner is right. That man there is Captain Lon Leather, the leader of the train robbers, and the other is one of his men. They tried hard to blow up a train with dynamite this morning about ten miles from here, and they had me tied close to where they intended the explosion to take place, so I would be blown to pieces. But my partners arrived in time and prevented an explosion that would have killed many and destroyed the engine and part of the train. I advise you to place them in the lock-up, if you have one in Jig Water."

"We've got a lock-up, all right," spoke up Lige Becker, "an' on your word we'll lock 'em up. Fetch ther galoots

along, boys! They oughter be lynched, that's what they had!"

"That's right," nodded Wild. "I'll make the charge against them, and I'll prove it, too. They had quite a nerve to disguise themselves and come here, after what they did this morning. They were after me, but they didn't get me. I'll see to it that the rest of the gang is run down, and I'll find out where the missing railroad man is at the same time."

"Three cheers fur Young Wild West!" shouted Lige Becker, as the prisoners were dragged away.

Leather and his right-hand man, whom he had called Dudley at the place where the dynamite had been placed on the track, were much crestfallen, but showed little signs of being badly frightened.

They were taken to a shanty near the outskirts of the town and close to the railroad track and roughly thrown in.

Then the door was locked and a man selected to stand guard till morning.

The shanty had been built purposely for a lock-up and was constructed of huge logs lapped and spiked at the ends.

There were no windows in it and the floor was of broken stones cemented over, so that it was so hard that an ax would have made no impression on it.

It was a pretty strong place for a jail, and without assistance from the outside no prisoner could possibly escape from it.

Probably the reason the villains did not show signs of fright was because there were two more of their gang in the town at the time they were captured.

They were outside the tavern ready to join in a fight should one occur.

But it had happened so suddenly that Lon Leather and Dudley were made prisoners before they hardly knew what had happened, and when they heard that they were to be taken to the lock-up they bided their time, feeling that they would be able to release them.

It so happened that the man left to keep a watch on the jail had been drinking altogether too much.

He walked around for a few minutes after he was left alone, and then becoming drowsy, went into the little lobby in front of the jail entrance and sat down and went to sleep.

The two members of the gang of railroad robbers had been keeping watch on him.

While the men of Jig Water were at the tavern talking about the capture and listening to Young Wild West's story of the attempt on his life, these two villains set to work to release the two prisoners.

They lost no time about it, for they did not know how soon someone might come around to spoil their scheme.

They sneaked into the lobby and bound and gagged the sleepy guard almost before he knew what had happened to him.

A quick search brought to light a key that would fit the padlock, and then the door was opened.

"Here we are, Captain Lon!" said one of the villains, as he stepped into the log jail. "I reckon you knowed you wouldn't have ter stay here very long."

"That's right, Bilkins," answered the captain.

Bilkins was rather hunchbacked, and he chuckled with delight at what he and his companion had succeeded in accomplishing.

"I ain't as tall as some men," he remarked, "but I reckon I kin generally do my share when it comes ter cute work."

"I reckon so," answered Dudley, as he felt his bonds severed by the stroke of a knife.

The next minute the two captives walked out of the lock-up, leaving the guard gagged and helpless in the little lobby.

"Dudley," said the captain, "we made a big mistake. You always look for a fight when you get a few drinks of liquor in you, and I guess I am built on something of the same plan. But I felt so sore against that young fellow who calls himself Young Wild West that I couldn't help issuing that challenge in the tavern. He is as sharp as a steel trap, and my! how quick!"

"Quick ain't no name for it, Cap. Why, he had you knocked inter a cocked hat in less than a second," answered Dudley, with a shrug of his shoulders.

"Well, never mind. He acts like a fortune teller, too; but it will do him no good. He will never find the missing Liddle, if he did make the boast that he would. Come on, boys! We will have to ride double with you, as they have no doubt got our horses stabled by this time, and it won't do to try and get them."

"Our nags is over in ther woods jest ther other side of ther station," said the hunchback.

"Well, it is a good thing that we have got half a dozen extra ones in the cave. It seems that we have struck a streak of bad luck since we sighted that campfire last night. But I guess it will work out all right."

The four railroad robbers now crossed the track and walked down on the other side, keeping in the shadow of the belt of timber that ran along it.

In a few minutes they reached the spot where the hunchback and his companion had left their horses, and then mounting double, they rode off.

They kept along parallel with the railroad track until they had covered about five miles, and then they turned up a shallow creek that crossed the trail and allowed their steeds to walk for perhaps a hundred yards.

They left the creek when they finally came to a sloping bank that was thickly covered with gravel, and then over a stony path they rode, still keeping the two horses on a walk.

The moon was up now, but they did not need the light it gave to find the way, for the horses seemed to know it well.

Into a gully they descended, and then after a gallop of

five minutes the horses were halted and relieved of their double burdens.

Once on the ground Captain Lon Leather uttered a cry that sounded much like the bark of a wolf.

In less than a second it was answered.

Then he gave a low whistle and proceeded straight ahead through a growth of stunted oaks, the men leading the horses behind him.

A few feet from the spot where they had halted they came to the black mouth of a cave.

"It is all right," said Leather, in a low tone of voice.

"Good!" came the reply from the cave. "Come right on in, Cap."

Then the four men and the two horses passed inside the dark opening.

The next minute the dim light of a bull's-eye lantern showed up and a man appeared.

He was the fellow who had narrowly missed being slain by the bullet our hero had sent through the rain and darkness the night before, for the bandage was still about his head.

"Where's ther other two horses?" he asked, in surprise.

"Over at the stable of the Jig Water tavern, I guess," answered Lon Leather.

The man said no more, but allowed the men to pass.

Around an angle of the irregular former opening in the ground the men went, and then a light showed up about fifty feet ahead.

They reached a place that was used as a stable for their horses before they turned into the lighted part of the cave, and while two of them were tying the steeds the others walked into the headquarters of the railroad robbers.

The two who were walked in were Captain Lon Leather and Dudley.

Three men arose to greet them.

They had been asleep, but as they had heard the captain say that he had meant to stay out all night, they were anxious to know what was the matter.

He told them in a few words how he and Dudley had been caught and jailed over in Jig Water, and how they had made their escape.

The villains were astounded to think that the two had met with such a close call.

"This Young Wild West must be a terror," one of them commented.

"He certainly is, boys," admitted the captain.

"I'll bet he come around here jest on purpose ter hunt us out," observed another.

"Most likely," nodded Leather. "So that means that the quicker we get rid of him the better it will be for us. How is the prisoner making out?"

"Oh, he's all right," was the reply. "He's been offerin' us money if we'd only let him go."

"He has, eh? Well, I am glad to hear that he is coming to his senses. How much does he offer?"

"Ten thousand dollars."

"That isn't enough. I'll have a talk with him in the morning and see how much better he will do than that. It might be a good idea to settle up this matter in a hurry and change our quarters. That is what we'll have to do if Young Wild West and his partners remain alive. But I am sleepy, so we will talk it over in the morning. Good-night, boys!"

So saying, the captain made his way to a curtained corner of the cave and disappeared.

CHAPTER VI.

IT IS STILL JIG WATER.

Young Wild West and his partners did not remain long out of bed after the two railroad robbers were placed in the lock-up.

They took it for granted that the jail was a strong one and that the villains would be safely held, and, after telling the crowd in the tavern all about the attempt to wreck the train, they turned in.

When they went to sleep at a seasonable hour they always made it a point to rise early.

It was a little after six the next morning when they sat down to breakfast in the roughly-furnished tavern dining-room.

They had just about finished the meal when Lige Becker, the lanky leader of the adherents to the name of "Jig Water," came rushing in.

"Ther two galoots we put in ther lock-up last night got out, an' ther guard was found bound an' gagged an' chilled ter ther bone a little while ago!" he exclaimed.

"Is that so?" asked Wild, rising from the table. "That is bad news, I must say."

"Yes. We ain't no further ahead in ther game than we was afore we caught 'em," and the lanky man shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, yes, we are. It is too bad that the scoundrels have escaped, but we are further ahead than we were before we caught them, because we know that they are located somewhere in this vicinity."

"I'm glad you look at it that way," and Becker showed signs of being relieved somewhat. "It ain't no fault of mine, though we hadn't oughter left a man what was full of bugjuice ter watch ther jail. He admits he was asleep when two men come an' caught him. They tied him up an' gagged him an' then got ther key out of his pocket. That's where another mistake was made! We hadn't oughter left ther key with him."

"So two men came and got the prisoners out, eh?" spoke up Jim Dart. "That shows that they must have been around somewhere at the time they were put in there."

"Yes, I reckon they must have been."

Our friends went out in the store part of the tavern

and found the man who had been left to guard the prisoners there.

By his looks he had put in a pretty tough night of it. Wild saw there was no need of questioning him.

Anyhow, it was none of his business.

Several of the citizens of the settlement had something to say about what had happened, but our friends simply told them that the next time they got the villains they would take measures to hold them.

When the train came along from Ogden there were several armed men aboard.

They were going to hunt for the train robbers, or rather they were ready to defend the train against an attack.

Wild knew it was hardly likely that the villains would make another attempt to wreck the train that day.

While a captive he had heard the leader say that they were after a certain amount of money that was supposed to be on that particular train.

The same three men who had been stopped from putting up the sign on the station the day before got off, and with them was the head man of the construction department.

Several passengers got off also, among them being a Mormon and his two wives.

There were few, if any, Mormons in Jig Water, which was rather remarkable, since the settlement was so close to the hot-bed of that faith.

A crowd was at the depot to see what the railroad people meant to do about putting up the Roseville sign on the building.

Lige Becker was there, of course, and there was an air of great importance about him.

He was not in an ugly mood, though many of his followers were.

Wild and his partners were interested in the affair and anxious to see how it would terminate.

When they heard that the boss of the construction department of the branch was there they readily imagined that he had come down to enforce the putting up of the sign.

They were right in this, for, after Lige Becker had been pointed out to him by one of the carpenters, he went over to him and said:

"What seems to be the objection about putting up this sign on the station?"

"Well, ther objection is that ther town's name is Jig Water, an' not Roseville," was the reply from the chairman of the committee.

"Don't you know that this station was built by the railroad company?"

"Yes, I know that. But we don't mean that ther station shall be called anything but Jig Water, jest ther same. Ther railroad kin build ther station all right, but we'll call it what we want, 'cause we was here afore ther railroad was."

"Well, I don't want any of you people to get into trouble, but the sign is going to be put up. This station is

going to be called Roseville, so you might as well make the best of it."

"Well, if you put up ther sign we'll fill it so full of lead that yer won't be able ter tell what it reads in less than ten minutes!"

"If you do that you will be liable to arrest for destroying the property of the railroad company."

"All right. Let her go!"

Hoarse mutterings could be heard on every hand now.

Young Wild West wanted to avert trouble if he could, so he called the superintendent aside.

"My friend," said he, "I have only been in this town since last night, but I find the people here are very set in their ways. If they don't want the name of their town changed why don't you let them have their way about it? No doubt the railroad company is powerful and can make trouble for them if they destroy the sign, but you should take a square look at the matter, and if you do that you will find that the citizens have their rights, as well as the company."

"Young man, I want no advice from you," said the man, brusquely.

"All right. Go ahead and put up the sign. I don't belong in this town, and so won't take any stand in the matter. But if you should look at the matter in the proper light and go and inform your superiors just how the situation stands I think the difficulty could be settled without any trouble."

"What you think don't amount to shucks," retorted the superintendent, snapping his fingers.

"All right. Go ahead with the show. I like to see excitement."

Our hero stepped back.

Several of the men had heard what passed between them and they nodded significantly at Wild.

"Go ahead and put the sign up," said the superintendent to the workmen. "I have got to hire a horse and meet the division superintendent up at the place where they say the outlaws tried to blow up the train yesterday morning. I would like to see the man who was tied to the log the train crew reported about."

"You was jest talkin' ter him, you headstrong galoot!" spoke up Lige Becker. "Young Wild West is ther feller what ther railroad robbers had tied ter ther log by ther side of ther track. But you said he didn't amount ter anything, so there's no need of yer havin' a talk with him. Go ahead an' put up your old sign!"

The official looked at Wild keenly.

But he said nothing to him just then.

He nodded for his three subordinates to go ahead, and they proceeded to put the sign in place.

As they had the iron braces and screws there ready for business, it did not take more than fifteen minutes to do it.

"There!" exclaimed the superintendent; "when the timetable comes out now this station will be put down as Roseville."

Crack!

Lige Becker fired a shot at the sign and the bullet hit the letter R.

That was the signal for a fusillade, and for the next ten minutes it sounded as though a battle royal was raging.

As many as thirty men emptied their revolvers at the objectionable sign.

Then they refilled the chambers and did the thing over again.

Instead of a sign it resembled a sieve in short order.

The superintendent was in a rage, but he was sensible enough not to try and stop the shooting.

It is quite likely he had an idea that he might get a bullet or so himself if he did.

He turned to the three workmen and said something to them, after which they all headed for the tavern.

The excited men of Jig Water jeered them derisively.

"Let them alone, boys!" called out Young Wild West. "Don't try to start any row with them. It won't pay."

"That's right!" yelled Lige Becker. "Now, some of yer run an' git our sign an' we'll put her up. Yer might ask them fellers if we kin use their hammer an' screw-driver."

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when one of the citizens ran after the superintendent and his men.

They were carrying the tools they had brought with them, and when they heard the man shouting to them they turned and waited for him to come up.

"Will yer let us have a hammer an' screw-driver?" the citizen asked, grinning all over his face.

"Certainly," answered the super. "Let him have what he wants, boys. There is no use in going any further with this business. I have done my part; it is for somebody higher than I am to act now."

The necessary tools were handed over, much to the surprise of Lige Becker and his followers.

They had thought there would be a row when they were asked for.

"That fellow is coming to his senses, I guess," said Wild, meaning the construction boss.

"He surely is," answered Jim. "Well, if I was in his place I think I would do the same thing."

"If you had been in his place the sign would not be riddled with bullets, because you would not have ordered it to be put up."

"That's right."

"This is more fun than I've had in six months!" Cheyenne Charlie declared.

From the very moment they had heard about the dispute over the name of the town he had been interested.

And he could not help lending a hand to get the riddled sign down and put up the one he had painted.

Wild knew there might be trouble from what was going on, but he did not attempt to stop the scout.

He had never seen him so interested in anything that did not concern them before.

Willing ones ran to the tavern and brought over the new sign and then the old one was taken down.

It was a sorry sight.

Up went the other, and though it was not finished the way Roseville had been, it made a fine show on the overhanging roof of the little station.

The crowd got down on the railroad track and stood admiring it.

"Now I reckon we know what's what!" exclaimed Lige Becker. "It's Jig Water yet, an' yer kin bet your sweet life it's goin' ter stay Jig Water!"

A cheer went up.

The riddled sign was thrown under the platform, after it had been broken in half a dozen pieces.

Young Wild West and his partners decided to go back to the tavern, now that the fun was over.

As they were leaving the platform Wild happened to take a look at the notice of reward, which was still tacked on the side of the building.

Then he noticed that a sheet of paper containing some writing was pinned to the poster.

"Hello! What's this?" he said, as he walked up to it.

Charlie and Jim followed him.

Then they read the following:

"To My Relatives and Friends:

"I have agreed to pay fifteen thousand dollars for my release, with the condition that I am to let the matter drop and not look to prosecute anyone connected with the affair. I am being treated well, but my captors swear they will starve me to death if the money is not forthcoming in forty-eight hours. It will be best to throw the money from the train in a bag to-morrow morning at a point five miles above this station. This is dictated by my captors, but I heartily agree with them and mean to keep my word.

(Signed) "JOS. W. LIDDLE.

"P. S.—If anybody comes to interfere with my captors when they appear to get the bag of money it will mean certain death for me.

J. W. L."

"What do you think of that, boys?" exclaimed our hero when he had read it.

"I wonder when that could have been put here?" said Jim. "I am certain it was not here when we came over this morning, for I was looking at the reward poster."

"Well, that means that someone put it up during the excitement," answered Wild. "Well, we will take this over to the tavern and ask that superintendent if it is Liddle's handwriting. He ought to know."

He placed the paper in his pocket, and without a word to any of the rest, started for the tavern.

The superintendent was standing at the bar when they entered.

"Would you know the handwriting of Joseph W. Liddle, the missing man?" Wild asked him, coming right down to business.

CHAPTER VII.

WHAT THE RAILROAD ROBBERS WERE UP TO.

Captain Lon Leather was one of the class who believed in rising early.

At the first signs of daylight, which was admitted to the big cave he had made his headquarters through a rift that opened in the face of a beetling precipice, he arose.

The rest of the robbers, save the man on guard, were still sleeping soundly.

The captain walked over to a corner of the cave and washed his face and hands in a trickling stream that lost itself through a split in the solid rock and went dashing down the face of the cliff to a deep gorge below.

Then he combed his rather long hair by aid of a pocket mirror and walked out to the entrance of the cave.

"Good-mornong, Cap," said the guard.

"Good-morning, Gus," was the reply. "How do you feel this morning?"

"Putty good, Cap. But I'd feel better if we had stopped ther train yisterday mornin' an' got hold of ther money what was in ther express car."

"Well, never mind; there is another day coming. I have an idea that we will stop the train that goes through to-night and get what we can. That is why I am up so early, or rather that is one reason."

"Good enough, Cap! You're a dandy leader, an' no mistake."

The sun was not yet up, but it was light enough to see objects quite plainly.

The yellow and red streaks in the east told Leather that it was going to be a fine day, in all probability.

"I guess it can be done all right," he muttered. "I'll send Dudley up on the morning train and let him come back on the train that is due to pass Jig Water at midnight. He can uncouple the express car at the commencement of the upgrade below here, and we will be on hand to do the rest. We haven't any more dynamite on hand, so we will have to roll a boulder down on the track just as the locomotive comes along. It can be done all right, I feel sure. There will be a gang looking out for something to happen, but it will happen in a different way, and just when they are not expecting it to. If it were not for this fellow Young Wild West it would be an easy thing. Well, I'll wake Dudley and get him off, for I have an idea that old Liddle will come to terms this morning, and we want to make a good haul before we let him go. Then we can light out of Utah and rest awhile."

He walked back into the cave, where the men were asleep.

It did not take him long to waken Dudley.

Then he told him what was required of him, and the villain hastened to get ready.

Dudley was a man who could be trusted to do anything his leader said.

He was fairly intelligent and one who would take desperate chances.

"You have got an hour to get your breakfast and reach Jig Water before the train comes," said Leather. You understand just where to uncouple the cars, now?"

"I understand, Cap."

"All right. We will be on the watch, and when we see that the engine and express car has left the train behind on the grade we will stand ready to send the boulder down on the track. It may be that the engineer and fireman will become aware that they are not pulling the train up the grade, so I will see to it that a couple of men are stationed below, with horses, to ride away in a hurry. If the engine stops and starts to back they will let a boulder roll down there, and that will stop them. You do your part, Dudley, and you can bet we will do ours!"

"All right, Cap."

Dudley proceeded to get a bite to eat, and while he was thus engaged the captain walked over to a curtain of skins not far from his sleeping quarters.

He lifted it, and in the dim light of the early morning a man was disclosed seated on a box.

He was fastened to a big rock with a chain that was about his waist, and as he looked up the man showed signs of being in anything but good spirits.

"Good-morning, Liddle," said Leather. "I heard you wanted to see me," said the villainous leader of the railroad robbers, smiling as though he was much pleased to find the person he had called upon in.

"I have made up my mind to give you ten thousand dollars to let me go, and I'll promise that I will not attempt to prosecute you for kidnapping me," was the reply. "I am discouraged over the fact that the company and my friends have not found me before this."

Captain Leather thought a moment.

"Make it fifteen thousand and I'll agree," he said, at length.

"Very well, I will do it. This close confinement is killing me. But I have stuck it out longer than you expected I would, you scoundrel!"

"There! Don't go to calling me any harsh names now. Just treat me like a gentleman, please."

A look of disgust crept over the prisoner's face.

"Have your way about it," he said. "All I want is to get away from here."

"Well, I will guarantee that you do get away the moment the fifteen thousand is paid. But I must be guaranteed the safety of myself and companions. There must be no trickery, for if there is you will never get away alive, even if I die myself!"

"I think that you will do as you agree to, villain as you are; and I assure you that I will surely do as I agree. Does that satisfy you?"

"Yes. Now just write a little note that I dictate and the means to give you your liberty will be fairly under way."

"I will do it," said the prisoner.

"Good! When you have done it and have a good wash and swallowed a cup of hot coffee you will feel like a new man, I'll wager! What is the sum of fifteen thousand dollars to a man like you? It ought to be fifty thousand."

"I have gone the limit when I say fifteen."

"Well, I don't believe that. But never mind! I'll agree to what I said. Here is paper and pencil. Wait till I fetch a lantern, so you can see good, and then write what I tell you to."

Two minutes later the prisoner was writing the note that Young Wild West found pinned to the reward poster on the station at Jig Water.

With a smile of satisfaction Captain Leather took the note.

Dudley was just finishing his hurried breakfast.

"Take this and pin it fast to the poster that's on the station," said the captain, handing it to him. "You'll have a chance to do it, because there will be a time there this morning when the train comes in. You heard what the men were talking about in the tavern last night, and you heard all about the war over the changing of the depot's name."

"Yes, I reckon I kin manage it, Cap," was the reply.

"Well, just let me shave off that mustache of yours, and then when you have put on the black wig I have and donned a miner's suit, I guess you'll pass."

It took twenty minutes to make the change in the man's appearance, and then the captain aroused one of the men and ordered him to ride over to the patch of woods near the depot with Dudley, so he could fetch his horse back.

In a few minutes they were away.

The captain went out right after them, and, mounting a hill close by, took a look around the vicinity.

It was quite a wild spot, and was less than a quarter of a mile from the railroad track.

From where he stood the villain could look over the trail that ran along to Jig Water from the east.

As he glanced over the winding path that led over hills and ran close to dangerous declivities he suddenly noticed a covered wagon approaching.

It was drawn by two horses that were plodding along at a slow gait.

A smile flitted over the face of Captain Leather.

"We may as well make all we can in the next twenty-four hours," he muttered. "I guess we'll go out and hold up that outfit. It may be that they have something in that wagon that will come in handy to us, even if they haven't much cash with them. Some family moving out this way to locate; Mormons, likely."

Turning, he went down the hill and into the cave.

The men were all up now and eating their breakfast.

"I want two of you to come with me," he said, addressing them. "There is a wagon coming along the trail over there. We will stop them and see what they have got. I have decided to make all we can while we are hanging

around here, for we will move as soon as we get rid of Liddle."

"Are yer goin' ter git rid of him soon, Cap?" asked Bilkins, the hunchback.

"To-morrow morning, I guess," was the retort. "We will get fifteen thousand dollars out of the deal, too."

The villains nodded and looked pleased.

"And then to-night we will make a pretty good haul from the train," went on the captain, who had not told them of his plans yet. "But come on! I want to stop the wagon I saw. Bilkins, you won't do, because you are too easy to identify. That hump of yours would give you away in case we got where someone was looking for us."

He picked out two of the men and then ordered them to put on masks.

A few minutes later they left the cave on foot, and, climbing over a ridge, made their way along in the direction of the trail.

It took them nearly ten minutes to get there, and they were not a moment too soon, for the wagon was close by now.

From the bushes they had concealed themselves behind, the villains could see that there were three people in the wagon, which was loaded with household goods.

A man of forty, a comely woman of two or three years his junior and a girl of probably eighteen were the occupants.

The girl was red-cheeked and pretty, and as the captain got a good look at her he nodded in a manner of satisfaction.

"She would make a good wife for me if she would only agree to marry me," he whispered to his companions.

They grinned but said nothing.

Then Captain Leather suddenly arose and stepped out before the team, a revolver in each hand.

"Halt! Throw up your hands!" he cried, sternly.

The three travelers were not expecting anything like this, evidently, for the man dropped the reins and fell back, while the two women uttered cries of alarm.

"Stop that!" commanded Leather; "not another word. If you go to making a fuss you'll die!"

Out came his two companions, and one of them took the horses by the heads.

Then the leader adjusted his mask and stepped up to the front of the wagon on one side, the other villain going around to the other.

"Just step out, please," he said to the three terrified travelers.

"What do yer want?" asked the man, as he tremblingly obeyed.

"What money you have," was the retort.

"We've got mighty little, mister," was the reply. "Won't yer let us go on? We're headin' fur a place called Jig Water, where we're goin' ter locate an' try ter earn an honest livin'."

Leather laughed harshly.

"Out with what money you have got!" he exclaimed. "No humbug now!"

With trembling hands the old man produced a well-worn wallet from his pocket.

"There's all we've got—every cent!" he said, the tears rolling down his cheeks. "It's mighty rough, mister; we wanted that money ter give us a little start when we settled down in Jig Water."

"I guess we need it more than you do," was the sardonic reply. "We are going traveling pretty soon, and we want all the money we can get. How much is there here, anyhow?"

He opened the wallet and found there was nearly eight hundred dollars in it.

"Whew!" he exclaimed; "this is pretty fair, I should say. I am very glad I happened to catch sight of you. I guess this will do without making any further search. Get in the wagon!"

The mother and daughter had paused with their feet on the crossbar of the shafts, and when they heard the order to get back in the wagon they lost no time in doing so.

The chances are that if he had found not much of value in the wallet Captain Leather would have acted in an insulting way to the woman and girl.

But he was so pleased at having got hold of nearly eight hundred dollars that he was satisfied to let them go.

"Go on!" he said. "And jog up the horses a little, too! When you get to Jig Water ask for a fellow called Young Wild West and tell him you met the railroad robbers. Tell him that we mean to finish him before we leave this part of the country."

"I will," answered the man, as he started off, hardly knowing what he was saying.

But he remembered just what the masked captain said, though.

The three villains went back to their cave and the wagon rolled on and reached Jig Water, not long after the trouble about the sign was over.

CHAPTER VIII.

WILD DECIDES TO WAIT AWHILE.

The construction superintendent looked at Wild in amazement.

"What do you mean, young fellow?" he gasped.

"Just what I said. Would you know the handwriting of Joseph W. Liddle if a specimen of it was shown you?"

"I certainly would."

"Well, read that and tell me if it is his writing, then."

The man took the paper Wild handed to him and read it with distended eyes.

"Why, this beats all!" he declared. "Yes, that is cer-

tainly Mr. Liddle's writing. Where did you get this note?"

"It was pinned to the poster on the side of the railroad station. I read it over and then removed it."

"Well, this is pretty good proof that Liddle is alive, isn't it?"

"Yes, if that is his writing it is."

"Well, it is his writing. We have all been studying his handwriting since he has been missing, just because we thought it would be possible that a letter would be sent. None of us had an idea but that he was alive all along."

"I will tell you something, Mr.——"

"Johnson is my name."

"Well, Mr. Johnson, I will tell you something, then. It is simply this: I am going to find Joseph W. Liddle and claim the reward of ten thousand dollars. I came all the way from the Black Hills to do it, and when I undertake a thing I generally succeed."

"Good! You are Young Wild West, so I hear?"

"Yes, that is my name."

"And you are the boy who was tied to the log when the engine dashed by yesterday morning a second after a big stick of dynamite was taken from the rail?"

"Yes, and here is the boy who cut the dynamite from the rail and saved the train from being wrecked."

Our hero nodded toward Jim as he spoke.

Johnson, the superintendent, put out both hands, his face beaming.

"I owe you an apology, gentlemen!" he exclaimed. "Shake with me!"

"Certainly!" and both Wild and Jim did so.

"I am sorry I cut you so short on the station a little while ago. I have thought the matter over and have come to the conclusion that you took the right stand in the matter. I shall do my best to smooth the affair over with the company."

"An' let ther Jig Water sign be up?" added the scout.

"Yes, I will advise that, too."

"Good enough! Then I will shake with yer, Johnson." They shook hands.

"Now," observed the superintendent, "I am going to ask you to ride over to the place where the train came so near being wrecked. I am to meet some of the officials and a couple of detectives there. The train was to stop there to let them off."

"All right. We will go over with you."

"Can I hire a horse, landlord?" asked Johnson.

"I reckon so," was the reply. "Right away, too."

"Very well, then; please have him brought around front as soon as possible."

Wild and his partners went out to the tavern stable and saddled their horses.

A man employed at the tavern was not long in getting a roan ready for the superintendent.

Then all four rode off in the direction of the place they wanted to go.

Half a mile down the trail they met a covered wagon drawn by two rather bony horses.

It was the outfit that had been held up by Captain Lon Leather and his two men.

It so happened that our friends were the first persons the travelers had met, since the robbery occurred.

The man brought his team to a halt and called out to them.

"Good-mornong, strangers," Wild said, as he rode up close to the front of the wagon.

"Good-mornin'," was the reply. "But it ain't been a very good mornin' fur us."

"Why, how is that?"

"We've been robbed."

"What!"

"A little more than a half hour ago three men with masks on their faces held us up an' took all ther money we had in ther world."

"Well, that is too bad."

Then the driver of the wagon, who gave his name as Mark Little, told just what had taken place.

"You say the three scoundrels did not have horses?" Wild asked, when he had concluded.

"No; they was on foot, wasn't they, Aggie?"

"Yes, father," answered the girl. "I watched them, too, and I saw them climb a hill near the trail and disappear among the rocks."

"Boys," observed our hero, turning to his two partners, "I guess those fellows belong to the gang we are looking for."

"I reckon so," nodded the scout.

Johnson was amazed at the story the traveler told.

"They are pretty bold to do a thing like that," he said.

"Well, I don't know. If they would kidnap a rich railroad official and hold him for a ransom I guess they would do almost anything."

"That is so. But are you sure that this is the same gang?"

"There is nothing sure about it, but it looks that way to me."

Our hero then got a good description of the spot where the hold-up had taken place and assured Little and his family that they would do their best to get their money from the robbers and return it to them.

"We will see you in Jig Water when we come back and let you know how we made out," he added.

The travelers were cheered somewhat at this, and when the wagon drove off they felt that they had met persons who were friendly to them, if nothing more.

"We'll go down that way," said Wild to Johnson. "It won't be much out of the way. If I can find the trail of those three men I have an idea that I won't be long in finding the missing railroad official."

"Very well," was the reply.

They let their horses go at a rapid pace until they came to about where they thought the spot was.

Both Little and his daughter had given a pretty good

description of the place, and it was not more than a minute after they brought their horses down to a walk that Wild was satisfied that they had come to it.

There had been little traveling that way since the rain, and it was quite easy for the practiced eyes of Wild and his partners to find a spot where the team of Little had been at a halt.

"Here we are!" our hero exclaimed.

Then he looked up the hill to the right of the trail and added:

"There is probably where the three villains went after making the hold-up."

He dismounted and started up the hill.

But he soon found that the ground was so stony that no such things as footprints could be made in it.

After a fruitless search of ten minutes he came back and mounted the sorrel stallion again.

"I can't find anything," he said. "We will go on over to the railroad track now."

The four now headed for the track and soon came to it.

Then they turned and followed it until they came to the place the superintendent was anxious to get to.

Something like a score of men were gathered there.

The majority of them had horses and there was a handcar on the track to convey those who had none to Jig Water.

The men, horses and handcar had come up on the train that morning.

Johnson received a hearty welcome.

He introduced Wild and his partners, and the men crowded around them.

After they had talked matters over for about twenty minutes our hero asked them what they had done since arriving there.

"Nothing," answered the section superintendent. "Our men here have tried to find the trail of the robbers, but they have been baffled at every turn. We have the sheriff and eight of his deputies here, and three detectives besides. We are united in believing that the same gang of men who meant to wreck the train yesterday is the one that is responsible for the disappearance of Joseph W. Liddle."

"Well, that is my opinion, too," Wild answered.

Then he showed him the note that had been pinned to the poster containing the offer of a reward for the return of the missing man.

The superintendent and the officials with him were fully as much surprised as Johnson had been.

And they felt relieved as well, for they now felt almost certain that Liddle was alive.

Wild looked over the men that had come to search for the railroad robbers and could not help smiling.

As far as he could see, there was not one among them who seemed to possess the tact to solve anything like a mystery.

"Yes, doubt the sheriff and his men were brave enough, if our game to a fight."

But that was not the thing needed just now.

The question of locating the robbers was the thing.

Our hero was pretty certain that Captain Leather and his gang could hardly be trailed to their hiding-place from there.

He really placed more dependence in finding them by starting the search from the place on the trail where the hold-up had taken place that morning.

Though he had failed to find any trace of the three masked men when he looked around on the side of the rocky hill, he had not given up the idea of dropping the search there.

He meant to renew it at his leisure.

But he thought it would be just as well to have the ten thousand dollars reward divided between him and his partners, and not between a dozen or more.

He answered all the questions put to him by the detectives in a ready and willing way.

Charlie and Jim acted in the same manner.

And when it was over they bade good-by to the officials and those with them and rode off.

"Well, boys, I guess we'll drop the hunt until these fellows get through," said Wild. "I can tell by the actions of the detectives and sheriff that they depend on us to land the game for them. They are making a mistake if they do, I can tell you!"

"We may as well go right back ter Jig Water, then," answered the scout.

"Yes, that's the programme. And we will take care to keep an eye on every person that comes there to-day. Captain Leather is a daring villain, and he may have nerve enough to come into town to try and find out what is going on."

"Well, he sent someone there this morning to put that note on the station," said Jim.

They rode back to the tavern and put their horses away.

Then they walked about the settlement and finally brought up at the station, which was a sort of center of attraction since the last sign had been put upon it.

They were just in time to see the handcar come along with Johnson and the other railroad officials upon it.

The car was stopped and lifted off the track by the men, and then they all took a look at the sign.

The section superintendent gave vent to an expression of anger, and, turning to Johnson, said:

"How do you account for that? You never said anything about it."

"I was so much interested in the railroad robbers that I forgot to make my report in regard to the sign bearing the name of Roseville," was the reply. "The citizens here seem unanimous in objecting to have the station go by a new name."

"Oh, they do, eh? Who owns this depot, I'd like to know?"

"Well, they admit that the company does, but they say the settlement has always been called Jig Water, and that it is going to remain that way."

"Well, they can call the one-horse place what they like, but this station on our road is going to be called Roseville. Why, how would the name Jig Water look on a timetable? It is preposterous!"

The other railroad men looked wise and shook their heads approvingly.

"Where is the sign we had painted and sent up here?" demanded the head superintendent.

"The men here shot it full of holes," answered Johnson. "If I had anything to say about it I would suggest that we leave the one they have put up and let it go at that. I suppose the owners of the property around here should be considered a little in the matter."

"Oh, you do, eh, Johnson? Well, I don't! That sign has got to come down."

Just then Lige Becker elbowed his way to the spot.

"If yer take that sign down we'll take your blamed old station down!" he exclaimed, with flashing eyes.

CHAPTER IX.

READY FOR BUSINESS.

Young Wild West realized that the trouble over the changing of the name of the settlement had only just begun.

The official who declared that the sign bearing the name of Jig Water must be taken down was a hot-headed, pompous sort of a man, anyhow, and that there would be trouble our hero did not doubt.

Johnson came over and asked Wild to try and talk it into him to let things rest as they were.

"I guess I had better not," was the reply.

Meanwhile the angered official walked over to where the ladder that had been used by the workmen lay, and, picking it up, placed it against the little sloping roof that overhung the platform.

Then he mounted the ladder and seized the sign preparatory to wrenching it from its fastenings.

But just then something happened.

Lige Becker caught hold of the ladder and jerked it down with a bang, leaving the irate official hanging to the edge of the roof.

"Great gimlets!" cried Cheyenne Charlie, and then he burst into a hearty laugh. "What is it goin' ter be, Roseville or Jig Water?"

"Jig Water, first, last an' all ther time!" yelled Becker.

His followers took up the cry and a yell went up that could be heard all through the settlement.

The head super dropped down upon the platform and looked around him savagely.

"I think you had better refer the matter to the directors of the road," remarked Wild, who did not want to see the man roughly handled.

No attention was paid to the remark.

Then the super pulled a roll of bills from his pocket, and, selecting a fifty from it, held it up and exclaimed:

"This is to the man who will take down that sign!"

"An' this ter ther galoot what tries it!" added Lige Becker, drawing his revolver and flourishing it.

"Arrest that man! Where is the sheriff?" bellowed the angry official.

But the sheriff was not there, and it was a good thing that he was not, for he would probably have tried to force his authority, and then there would have been a fight.

A hoarse laugh went up from the crowd, which had gathered in a hurry, and, realizing that he stood no show, the discomfited super spoke something in a low tone to his companions, and then they all started for the tavern.

The citizens jeered and hooted them as they went, for they were jubilant over another victory in the "name war."

That ended it for the time, for when the train came along bound for Ogden the railroad men went back, leaving the name of Jig Water on the little depot in its glare of red and white.

The excitement gradually died down again, and soon things were running along smoothly again.

Of course, a number of the men had to celebrate the third victory over the railroad people, and in order to steer clear of them our friends walked down to the blacksmith shop and remained there till noon.

Charlie took a drink occasionally, and, as nearly everyone that came along urged him to take something, our hero thought it was best to take him away from the temptation.

At the blacksmith shop they learned that the Little family were stopping temporarily with the friends that had induced them to make the journey there.

"Ther house is right across ther street," the blacksmith said, pointing it out. "It is Bill Jorkins' place. Tim an' his whole family has gone an' turned Mormons lately."

"Mormons, eh?" said our hero. "I suppose that means that the newcomers will turn to that faith, too."

"Oh! you kin bet on that!" nodded the blacksmith. "They was urged ter come here jest ter add more ter the Mormon faith, I reckon. Well, it ain't none of my business. A Mormon's jest as good as anything else, long as he behaves himself. Some of 'em have got altogether too many wives, though. I reckon one's enough fur any man, an' sometimes that one's too many."

Wild saw that the hardy blacksmith was quite a philosopher in his way.

When he asked him his opinion about the attempt to change the name of the settlement he answered that it made no difference to him whether they called it Jig Water or some other kind of water.

That afternoon Mark Little sought out our hero and called him around to the rear of the tavern.

"Young feller," said he, "I'm in more trouble."

"How is that?" Wild asked.

"Well, ther friend of mine what got me ter move out here has deceived me."

"Deceived you?"

"Yes, he's one of them Mormons, an' so is his family. He says he will get me enough money ter put up a house if I'll only jine in ther faith. Wants ter marry my daughter, too, when he's got a wife already. An' ther wife don't object ter his doin' it, which is ther worst part of it. It was bad enough ter lose all ther money we had in ther world, but ter git deceived like this an' be placed in ther fix we're in is a good deal worse."

"Well, I should say it was," said Wild, who could not help but sympathize with him. "I tell you what you do. You go right down to the blacksmith shop and tell him what you have told me. Then ask him to store your things and let you board in his house. I'll come down and pay him your board for a week, and in that time you ought to get something to do. I hope to get the money back that you had stolen from you, and if I do I will take out what I have advanced you. Don't you agree to let your daughter marry a man who already has a wife. You should die fighting before you let anything like that occur."

"An' yer kin bet I will!" exclaimed the man, his eyes flashing dangerously.

He went away in a better frame of mind, but no doubt wishing that he had never started to come to Utah.

It was nearly dark when the detectives and the deputies came into town.

They had found nothing, so one of them told Wild.

But they were going to try again the next day.

"Do you think the ransom will be paid?" our hero asked.

"Well, I think that is the best thing that could be done," was the reply.

"You don't know whether they mean to pay it or not, then?"

"We won't know until the train gets in to-morrow morning."

"Well, if it is paid the robbers will have the privilege of getting away unmolested."

"Oh, I don't know about that."

"But Liddle has given his word to the leader of the band, according to the note."

"A man can say anything in order to save his life."

"Well, I believe that Liddle means that the robbers shall go free."

"Are you going to stop looking for them?"

"I haven't really begun to look yet. But I have nothing to do with this arrangement between Liddle and his captor, anyway. I have come all the way from the Black Hills, and I feel that I ought to get the reward to pay me for coming."

The detective smiled.

"What you ought to get and what you will get are probably two different things," said he.

"Oh, I don't know. I guess it won't be necessary for

the ransom money to be paid for the release of Liddle. I feel it in my bones that I am going to get him before the train comes in to-morrow morning."

The detective again laughed—rather derisively this time.

"You mean well, no doubt," he observed, and then he walked away.

Wild meant to pay a visit to the spot where the wagon had been held up that morning, but he did not want to give any of the men a chance to follow him.

He felt certain that there were some of them who were just waiting to get the chance to follow him and his partners.

"Boys," said he, when he got a chance to talk to Charlie and Jim a few minutes later, "we have got to be pretty sly about getting away from here to-night. That sheriff is only waiting to get a chance to follow us. I think he is of the opinion that we know about where the railroad robbers are located."

"Well, I wish we did," answered Jim.

"We must find out before to-morrow morning."

"Must is a hard word, Wild."

"I know it, but this is not the first time you have heard me use it."

"Oh, no."

"Well, about ten o'clock we will go to our sleeping quarters. But before we do I want you to go out and have the horses saddled and bridled and waiting in the little clump of woods behind the stable. If you have to take the man in charge of the stable in your confidence, all right. It won't make any difference; you can tell him why we want to get away without being seen."

"All right," retorted Jim. "You can bet I'll have the horses there all right."

They hung around the balance of the evening, and finally Dart went out and got the horses where they wanted them.

A few minutes after he came in Wild gave it out that they were going to bed, so they could get up early and start out in search of the railroad robbers.

When they got to the upper story of the tavern, however, they opened the window that overlooked the little shed in the rear of the building and quietly crawled out.

One at a time they dropped to the ground.

"Now for the most persistent search of all!" exclaimed Young Wild West in a whisper. "Boys, we mustn't come back without Joseph W. Liddle on this trip."

"All right, Wild, jest as you say," nodded the scout, as though it would have to go that way, anyhow, now.

They rode off along the trail at a smart pace and soon reached the spot where the wagon had been held up that morning.

Wild knew it well, even in the darkness.

He had carefully set it down in his mind's eye that morning, and he was not the one to forget.

"Now, then," said he, as he dismounted, "we must find a good place to leave the horses and then go up that hill.

Those three masked fellows were on foot and they went up this way, so Little and his daughter stated. If that is the case they can't be located very far away."

His companions nodded.

Then they slid to the ground and began looking around for a place to leave the horses.

On the other side of the trail they found a suitable spot.

Dropping the bridle-reins over their heads, they patted them on the necks and then crossed over and ascended the hill.

"Don't make any more noise than you can help, boys," Wild whispered. "It might be that we are closer to them than we think."

"If they're around here anywhere they're about five miles from ther place where they tried ter blow up ther train an' kill you," answered Charlie.

"Well, they chose that spot because there was a sharp curve there."

"I reckon that was it."

"And they had their horses with them, so that shows their hang-out is not close to that spot," spoke up Jim.

The three were compelled to use the utmost caution in working their way along the rugged slope.

There was danger of them tumbling into some hole that could not be seen in the darkness.

But they worked their way on up until they came to the comparatively level above.

We say comparatively level, for it was an unbroken succession of rocks, trees, bushes and jagged spurs.

Once up there they had the advantage of the light of the moon.

But that was not needed for our hero to make a discovery just then.

He caught the glimmer of a lantern for just an instant in the hollow below them.

He alone saw it.

"Boys," said he, "I guess we are on the right track."

"Why?" asked Jim, in a low whisper.

"I just saw a lighted lantern down there," and he pointed toward the spot.

"Are yer sure it was a lantern, Wild?" queried the scout.

"As sure as I am that we are here together."

"Let's git down that way, then."

"Yes, but we have got to be mighty careful."

But they knew how to go about it.

The moon aided them now, but it also made it possible for them to be discovered by anyone who might be watching from below.

They moved on down and soon stood before the entrance to the cave that was occupied by the eight railroad robbers, though they did not know it.

Less than a hundred feet from them was the missing railroad official!

They moved over and got close to the face of the cliff.

Then they crept cautiously along, and the first thing they knew they were right in the mouth of the cave.

But they would not have thought so much of this if the measured tread of a man had not come to their ears at that instant.

"Be ready for business, boys!" whispered Young Wild West.

CHAPTER X.

THE ROBBERS ARE FOILED.

Wild and his partners listened for fully a minute without exchanging a word or moving from the spot.

Then our hero leaned over and whispered:

"You stay right here till I go in and find out what that fellow is walking up and down for."

They nodded and then the daring young deadshot crept softly in the direction of the place where the footsteps came from.

He kept close to the rocky wall of the cave as he went forward, for he was not going to take the chance of moving ahead with nothing to guide him.

And the course of action he chose was the very best he could have done.

He had not gone more than twenty feet when he saw a faint light ahead.

Then he came to a turn and beheld a man walking up and down, while not far from him was a lighted lantern on the rocky floor.

He could not see the man's face, but he felt confident that he was one of the railroad robbers.

He was just thinking of moving a little closer when a men came around a bend in the cavernous place and called to the fellow on guard.

"We're goin' ter git ready ter leave," Wild heard him say. "If ther train is on time she'll reach ther grade jest fifty minutes from now, so ther captain says. We kin git there in about twenty minutes, but there's nothin' like bein' on time."

"Is all hands goin'?" questioned the guard.

"Yes, ther whole seven of us. Dudley will come down on the train. It might be that he'll have things all ready fur us ter grab what's in ther express car an' light out."

"Well, we'll have ter work in a hurry when ther time comes, anyhow. If Dudley uncouples ther cars some of them what's in 'em might take a notion ter jump out an' run along ther track ter give us fight. Yer know they are out lookin' fur us good an' strong now."

"Yes, but ther captain says we kin git ther money from ther express car an' be away afore anybody gits to us. Leave it to ter ther captain! What Lon Leather don't know no one does!"

This was very interesting news to Young Wild West.

"So they are going to stop the train to-night and rob it, are they?" he muttered under his breath. "Well, I

hardly think they will do much robbing. I guess we can fix that part of it all right."

Wild decided to get out of the cave and go and get their horses and ride around the track, so they could be on hand to prevent the villains from carrying out their foul scheme.

He crept softly back and joined his two companions.

Then he quickly told them what he had learned.

"Let us get back and get the horses and ride around to the track," he said. "We can come back here after it is over."

"Jest as you say, Wild," answered the scout.

"That is the best thing to do," said Jim.

They did not use so much caution in getting to the top of the hill as they had in coming.

They knew the way now, and that made a vast difference.

They were not more than ten minutes in getting back to their horses, and, finding them just as they had left them, they mounted and started for the railroad track.

Wild led the way, and when it was reached he gave the word to cross it and take to the woods on the other side.

"I wonder what time that train is due, anyhow?" he asked his partners.

"Somewhere about this time, I reckon," answered the scout. "I heard Lige Becker say that it got ter Jig Water about twelve o'clock."

"And it is about ten miles from the settlement where the railroad robbers intend to operate. Well, we have time, I guess."

He looked at his watch when they got to a place where a patch of moonlight came streaming through the trees and then declared that he was sure they had.

Picking their way along through the woods, they rode on until they thought they must be getting close to the spot where the robbers intended to operate.

Then they halted and dismounted.

Wild told his partners to remain there while he went over close to the track and had a look around.

He made his way softly through the woods and soon came to a bank that overlooked the track.

It was just at the top of the grade, and right above it was a short curve.

"This looks as though it might be the place," he thought. "It could not be better adapted for their foul purpose, anyhow."

Just then he heard a noise on the other side.

The sound was made by approaching horses.

The animals were on a walk, but he could clearly hear them.

"I guess we got here ahead of them," our hero muttered. "Well, this is the place where they are going to stop the train, I guess."

He waited until he heard the men dismount on the other side, and then he hastened back to his partners.

"Come on!" he said. "We have struck the right spot the first time."

"Good!" exclaimed the scout.

They did not mount, but led their horses along to within a short distance of the railroad, and then leaving them there, crept forward to the bank that overlooked the track.

They sat down in comfortable positions and listened.

There was nothing difficult about them hearing the villains on the other side.

They could hear them moving about, and now and then a word or two reached their ears.

"They are getting a boulder ready to send it crashing down the bank upon the track," Wild whispered. "Jim, I guess you will be the one to go up the track a ways to light a fire to stop the train before it gets here. You can get your leaves and twigs all ready, and when you hear the train coming run down and light it on the track."

"All right," answered Jim; "I guess I can do that. How far will I go?"

"About a hundred yards will be enough."

"Well, I had better go now, then, so I can have everything ready."

"Yes."

Dart at once started off.

On his way through the woods he came upon a dead tree that had blown down, and from it he broke an armful of the smaller branches it contained.

Then he gathered some of the dry leaves that were to be found and was ready for business.

Wild had told him that the engine and express car were to be cut loose from the rest of the train, but they feared that the engineer might not notice it in time to avert crashing into the boulder.

So it had fell to Jim to prevent such an accident.

It was not very long before a locomotive whistle sounded in the distance, though it did seem to be a good while to Dart.

He got up and made ready to rush out on the track and light his little bonfire.

Pretty soon he saw the headlight of the locomotive.

It sent out a dancing glare on the rails, and with a humming sound, the train came on.

Jim stepped out and hurried down to the track.

His bundle of faggots was placed upon the leaves and then he struck a match.

But just as he was about to apply the match to the leaves he was seized in an iron grip and flung back.

"No, yer don't, yer young galoot!" a voice hissed in his ear, and then he received a blow on the head that stunned him for the moment.

By the time he came to he had been rendered helpless and was carried up the bank.

Toot! toot! toot!

The sharp whistle of the locomotive sounded and then he heard it coming to a stop.

He looked around as he was being carried up the steep bank and managed to observe that the engine had but one car coupled to it, and that it had reached a spot nearly

opposite where Wild and Charlie were before stopping. Then, as he was dropped upon the ground, a volley of rifle-shots rang out.

The fight had started.

The two men who had caught Jim were those sent by Captain Lon Leather to hurl a boulder down upon the track in the rear of the express car, in case it was necessary.

They had been ready to do the task when they saw Jim come out and lay the faggots on the track.

Then it was quite easy for them to steal up and capture him.

They had not tied him, probably thinking he was still unconscious, as the boy had not put up the least struggle.

When they dropped him on the ground one of them remarked:

"What are we goin' ter do with this galoot? It ain't Young Wild West, as you thought it was."

"Give him another clip on ther head an' let him be where he is," was the gruff reply. "There's a fight goin' on' an' we're needed over there."

"All right."

The villain who had spoken first raised his revolver to deal Jim a crushing blow with the butt.

But he never did.

Crack!

A line of fire shot up from the prostate body of the boy and the robber reeled and fell to the ground.

Crack!

Down went the other fellow just as he was going to shoot at the boy.

"I guess I was just in time to save my life," muttered Dart, as he arose to his feet and rubbed the spot on his head where he had been struck. "It was tough to shoot them that way, but it had to be done."

He held his six-shooter in his hand and darted down upon the railroad track.

The shooting had died out all of a sudden.

"Whoopee! Whoopee!" he heard the voice of Cheyenne Charlie yell out.

"That means victory," muttered Dart.

Then he yelled an answering cry.

"This way, Jim!" called out Wild. "Where have you been?"

"I was caught by two of the railroad robbers," was the reply.

"What!"

"That's right. I had to shoot them to save my own life."

"Great Scott!" ejaculated the express messenger, as he leaped down from the car; "is that right, young feller?"

Besides the two Jim dropped, three others belonging to the robber band went down.

This left but three of them alive.

And two of them were the captain and the man Dudley, who had jumped from the express car as soon as he saw they stood no show.

Jim's head ached him somewhat, but he declared that he was fit for a dozen more of the railroad robbers if there were many about.

"I saw you," said the engineer. "I was looking straight ahead when you ran out upon the track with your arms full of something. Then I saw the two men dart at you and knock you down. That was enough to make me shut her off, you can bet! And I didn't know that we'd left the rest of the train behind till I did shut her off. It was queer, but that's the way it was."

Wild and his partners waited until the locomotive backed down the grade and hooked fast to the passenger cars, and then, after telling the conductor as much about it as he cared to, he told him to go ahead with the train.

"But how about the bodies of those who got shot?" the conductor asked.

"Well, you can take them aboard if you want to."

"It might be that the rest of them could be identified by something found on the dead men," the conductor said.

"All right. Go ahead and get them. Jim will show you the two who tried so hard to fix him. The other three are lying right along the track. They shot the windows out of the cab when they came running down the bank, but that is all they did do. They would have done a good deal worse if we hadn't opened fire on them just then, though."

"I guess they would!" exclaimed the engineer.

Jim quickly showed the trainhands where the two villains had dropped up on the bank, and then he joined our hero and the scout and made for their horses.

The express messenger had learned the names of our friends as soon as the brief fight was over.

He now took off his cap and cried out in stentorian tones:

"Hurrah for Young Wild West and his pards!"

A cheer went up from everybody on the train.

"Now, boys," said Wild, "we must get back to the cave of the railroad robbers. There are only three of them left, and if it so happens that they have got the missing Liddle in that cave we must get him out and try and take them alive."

"That's right," replied Jim.

They now started on a gallop and were nearly at the point where they had to cross the track when the train went past.

CHAPTER XI.

ONLY TWO OF THE RAILROAD ROBBERS LEFT.

There was a feeling of terror upon Captain Lon Leather as he mounted his horses and fled from the scene of the short fight on the railroad track.

He did not look around for the rest of his gang, but, seeing one of them riding ahead of him, put spurs to his steed and hastened to overtake him.

As he neared the man he saw it was Bilkins, the hunchback.

"Is that you, Cap?" asked the man, looking around just then.

"Yes, it's me," was the reply.

"Wasn't that fierce work, Cap?"

"Yes," and then Leather got up alongside him.

"I seen two of ther boys go down when them shots come from ther other side of ther track. Young Wild West an' his pards must have been there, I reckon."

"They were. I recognized the voices of them as I got to cover."

They kept on until they came to the shallow creek that had to be waded through before they could get to the cave.

Just then they heard a splashing in the water ahead of them.

A horse was already making its way up the creek, and it was going faster than a walk.

"We are not the only ones, after all," said the captain, acting as though he felt relieved.

"No, an' whoever it is, he's in a hurry."

"Well, we may as well hurry, too. It will pay, I think."

So they let their horses trot up the creek, and when they left it and emerged into a patch of moonlight, a voice greeted them with:

"Hello! I'm glad I ain't ther only one!"

It was Dudley, the villain who had been on the train and uncoupled it.

The captain and Bilkins were more than glad to meet him.

"Is this all there's left of us?" asked Dudley.

"We don't know yet," replied the captain.

"Well, I seen poor Gus go down right alongside of me. I know he's a goner, anyhow."

"That makes three, then," spoke up the hunchback. "I know that two went down myself. They was shootin' lead a streak when they dropped, too."

"We ~~are~~ hope that some more of them will show up soon," mad Leather. "All are accounted for but the two I sent down to be ready to hurl a boulder down in case the engine tried to back. The chances are that they have got away. They may be at the cave when we get there."

But when they reached the cave a few minutes later and gave the signal no answer came.

The three villains led their horses into the cave.

A lantern had been left burning in the main cave, and it was there yet.

"No one has been here," observed the captain. "Now, Bilkins, you stand guard while Dudley and I have a little talk. We have got to decide upon a plan of action."

"All right, Cap."

The hunchback went out into the dark part of the cave.

Leather turned up the lantern and threw himself on a box.

"Sit down, Dudley," he said.

His right-hand man obeyed.

"You look worried, Cap," he observed.

"I feel worried, I may as well admit."

"It was a blamed bad piece of business, wasn't it?"

"Yes."

"I wonder how it was that Young Wild West an' his pards was right there in time ter pour hot lead inter us?"

"That is a mystery. In fact, that is what worries me."

"You don't think that one of ther men could have give it away, do yer?"

"No, I don't think that. I don't know what to think."

"S'pose we're ther only three what's left, Cap?"

"Well, it looks as though that's the case, Dudley."

"If we are it don't say that we mustn't give up ther idea of gittin' that fifteen thousand to-morrer mornin'."

"Oh, no. We want that more than ever now. We will take the chances on the letter Liddle wrote to have the effect we want it to. But there's Bilkins."

"I know," answered Dudley, in a whisper. "It are too bad he wasn't the one what went under instead of Gus. He's a humpback, an' if we're chased he'll be ther means of givin' us away, no matter what kind of disguises we have on."

"That's right. I am sorry to say it, but we've got to leave Bilkins in the lurch."

At that instant there came an angry snarl from the dark cave outside.

The next instant the hunchback leaped in by them, a knife in his hand and his eyes blazing with fury.

"What's that you said?" he shrieked. "It's a good thing that I made up my mind that it would be a good idea fur me ter hear what yer proposed ter do. So yer think 'cause I'm a hunchback I'll be ther means of givin' yer away, hey? You're goin' ter leave me in ther lurch, are yer? Well, I guess not! Where you two fellers go Bilkins will go! Do yer hear what I say? I may be a humpback, but I'm goin' ter have my rights."

By the time he had finished speaking the two villains had recovered from the astonishment that his abrupt entrance had caused.

"Hold on, now, Bilkins," said Dudley. "Take it easy, will yer? Jest because we said we was goin' ter shake yer don't mean that we ain't goin' ter give you your share of everything. You ought ter know that you'd stand a better chance if yer went it alone, anyhow."

Bilkins put his knife back in his belt.

"See here," he said, in a tone of voice that was more calm. "I want you fellers ter understand one thing, an' that is that I don't give a continental fur either one of yer! I ain't afraid that I'll git caught, on account of bein' deformed a little. There ain't none of them galoots what's lookin' fur us that knows how I look, 'cause they ain't never seen me. Now I'll tell yer what I'll do."

"What is it?" asked Captain Leather, coldly.

"You give me five thousand dollars an' I'll quit right now an' shift for myself."

"I hardly think I'll do that," was the reply.

"Why won't yer? You've got a good deal more than

that in your clothes, an' some of it belongs ter me, too! How much will yer give me, then?"

"Not one dollar!"

The captain had his hand on the butt of his revolver now.

"Yer won't give me a dollar!" shrieked the hunchback.

"Then yer won't live ter keep what you've got yourself!"

The knife was in his hand again, and with the quickness of a panther he leaped toward the captain.

Crack!

Leather fired just in the nick of time, for in another instant the sharp blade would have been plunged into his breast.

The hunchback gave a gasp and staggered back.

Dudley caught him as he was falling and dragged him to a corner.

"That was a close call!" exclaimed the captain, looking at his right-hand man. "I shot him in self-defense, Dudley."

"You sartinly did, Cap," was the reply. "I thought he was goin' ter reach yer, yer was so long in firin'."

A cold sweat had broken out on the brow of the leader of the railroad robbers.

"Dudley," said he, hoarsely, "I guess there's only two of us left now."

"I reckon so, Cap."

"You will stick to me, won't you?"

"I'll never go back on yer, Cap, as long as yer don't go back on me."

"I'll never go back on you, Dudley. I think as much of you as if you were a brother. You have been my right bower, Dudley, ever since we knew each other."

"I'll go my whole length fur yer, Lon!" declared the villain.

"Well, we will try and get the money-bag if it is thrown from the train in the morning, and then we will come back and set Liddle free, and make him swear that he will prevent us from being pursued. Once we get over into Idaho we will be all right. They will never catch us then."

"What's ther matter with havin' a little talk with old Liddle about this here business?" Dudley said, after a pause.

"All right."

"We want ter impress it on him that ther only show he's got is ter keep anyone from follerin' us."

"Well, we will get to a high point and watch him till he is out of sight, anyhow, and if we see him meet anyone and so much as look back we will shoot him with our rifles."

All that transpired in the cave must surely have been heard by the prisoner chained to the rock in the corner.

His feelings can better be imagined than described.

When Dudley stepped over and lifted the curtain the railroad official was lying on the pile of skins that had been put there for that purpose.

He got up, the chain clanking dismally as he did so.

"I wish it was all over and I was out of here," he said, wearily.

"So do I, boss," answered Dudley. "You know what show you've got, I reckon."

"Suppose the money is not thrown off the train to-morrow?" asked the prisoner, anxiously.

"Then we will light out an' leave yer ter starve here in ther cave."

"You would not wait another day until I could send a message for the money?"

"Not another day. Our gang is broke up, an' we've got ter leave. Yer might stand a show of bein' found here by Young Wild West or some of ther rest, but I've got my doubts about anyone findin' ther cave. They won't by tryin' ter trail us, that's sartin. No, Mr. Liddle, your only chance ter git away to-morrer mornin' lays on that fifteen thousand dollars bein' thrown from ther train."

"Oh! this is awful!" groaned the wretched man, wringing his hands.

"Well, don't git discouraged. It are most likely that ther money will come."

"But you must stop anyone from coming in pursuit of us," spoke up Captain Leather.

"Give me a horse and let me go now, and I'll guarantee that you will get the money in the morning," said Liddle, looking hopefully at the villains.

They both shook their heads.

"We couldn't trust you," answered Leather. "No! The money must come in the way we expect it, or they will never see you alive! We have held you nine days now, and if we don't get the money you shall die!"

"We'll leave him ter starve ter death," spoke up Dudley.

"No! We won't trust to that. He shall die in the same way Bilkins did a little while ago."

The prisoner shuddered.

He sat down on the box that had been allotted to him in lieu of a chair and rested his head in his hands.

"It is a case of your money or your life!" said Dudley, shaking his finger at the captive.

"It will cost just fifteen thousand dollars to get your liberty!" added Leather.

"No, it won't!" exclaimed a voice behind them; "it will only cost ten thousand, the amount of the reward offered!"

Turning, the two villains saw Young Wild West standing before them, a revolver in his hand and a smile on his handsome face.

"Saved!" cried John W. Liddle, springing to his feet.

"I reckon you've spoke that right, old man," and then Cheyenne Charlie appeared, followed by Jim Dart.

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

Wild and his partners were not long in getting back to the place where they had to dismount and leave their horses in order to reach the cave of the railroad robbers.

They felt that the climax was rapidly approaching.

Knowing the way so well, they rapidly went up the rocky hill, and, reaching the top, proceeded more cautiously down into the gully.

It so happened that they got there just as Leather and Dudley were drinking the whisky.

Finding no guard there, Wild and his companions crept into the cave.

They were ready in case they came upon the villains, for they knew there were but three of them, at the most.

They could handle them with little trouble.

But no one interfered with them, and when they got a little further they heard voices.

Wild gave a nod of satisfaction.

"I guess we have got them, boys," he whispered; "come on."

Into the part of the cavern where the horses of the robbers were kept, and then they could see into the main cave.

When they heard a voice propose that they have a talk with Liddle they were, of course, elated.

That proved to them that they had made no mistake in laying the abduction of the railroad official to Captain Leather and his gang.

Nearer they crept, and finally they paused behind a jutting point of rock within a dozen feet of the two villains.

They peeped from behind the rock and saw Dudley pull aside the curtain in the corner.

Wild waited until they had gone about far enough, and then taking the cue when the fifteen thousand dollars was spoken of he stepped forward, as was stated at the conclusion of the last chapter.

If ever two men were astounded Captain Leather and Dudley were.

"Hold up your hands!" our hero exclaimed.

Up went both the villains' hands.

"Where is the other fellow?" Wild asked.

"He's dead," quickly answered Liddle. "The captain shot him while they were having a quarrel a few minutes ago. These are all that are left of the eight, according to what I heard them say."

"This chain is fastened to me by a lock, and the captain has the key," said the prisoner, who was remarkably calm in the face of what had occurred.

"Take your weapons from the two scoundrels, Jim," said Wild.

—Even stock still while Jim took his

When he turned to Dudley some-

nd to make a run for his life.

ed to the floor.

he went, upsetting him

ad got around the rock

I'll fetch him!" Wild

Fearlessly he darted behind the rock and saw Dudley in the act of cutting the halter of a horse to get the animal out.

Jim had taken his revolver from him just as he made the attempt to get away.

Consequently he only had the knife to use.

Seeing that he was about to be caught, he rushed at Wild.

"Fight me like a man and give me a chance for my life!" he cried.

"All right!" Wild answered; "anything to please you. Come on!"

He drew his hunting-knife as he spoke, while he stepped around lightly in the semi-darkness.

Enough light came from the main cave for them to see each other.

Dudley meant to make a fight for his life.

"If I git ther best of yer I kin go free, Young Wild West!" he exclaimed, as he made ready to spring toward the dashing young deadshot.

"You certainly can," was the reply.

Then Dudley made a plunge at Wild with his knife.

With a lightning-like movement Wild struck the knife from his hand.

Then Wild caught the villain by the throat and forced him down.

In quick order the scout had his hands bound behind him.

Then he was dragged into the light.

Jim had already tied Captain Leather up.

"So you failed to get away, Dudley?" said the captain, looking at him.

"I reckon I did," was the reply. "Young Wild West was too much fur me."

Jim had released Liddle from the chain by this time and the man was walking around to get the stiffness out of his joints.

"It is a good thing that my appetite kept up and that they fed me well," the railroad official observed. "If it had not been for that I would be a perfect wreck now. As it is, I feel weak."

"You will be all right in a day or so," said Wild.

"I think so. I have to thank you and your two friends for saving me, and I have been trying hard to find words to do it in the proper way."

"Well, stop trying then. We were attracted to Utah by the offer of a reward for the return of you, and as we have been successful, I feel like congratulating you more than anything else."

"Well, proceed and congratulate me," answered Liddle, smiling. "Then I will thank you."

"Suppose we let it go as it is? I guess we understand each other."

"Very well. Now, how soon can you get me to Jig Water?"

"In less than half an hour. It depends on how well you can ride a horse."

"Not very well. But I could almost ride a rail just now; I feel so joyous. Don't let these two villains get away. They must get the full limit of the law."

A few minutes later they were at the mouth of the cave.

There were enough horses there for our friends, and more; so they picked out three of the best after the prisoners and Liddle had been mounted and then led the others.

"Captain Leather, you will show the way to the trail," said Wild. "We came on foot, and we could not get back mounted over the hill."

There was no reply to this, but Wild knew they were going right.

As they struck the creek he gave a nod.

When they finally came to the trail it was easier to understand it.

"A very good hiding-place you had, Captain Leather," our hero said. "If you had not bothered holding up that wagon yesterday it is hardly likely that you would have been found yet. And you might have succeeded in robbing the train to-night, too. That is what a railroad robber gets for turning highwayman."

"What do you mean?" asked Leather, who, though a helpless prisoner, was anxious to know how it was that the cave had been found.

Wild humored him and let him know just how they had come to find the place, adding that he had crept in the cave and heard them getting ready to go out and stop the train.

It was pretty late in the night when the party rode up to the tavern.

But the place was still open, for there was a poker game going on and the proprietor was taking in money.

The arrival of Young Wild West broke up the game, however.

As soon as it was announced that he had brought in the missing railroad official the excitement grew intense.

There were those there who were for lynching the prisoners, of course, but they were talked out of this by Wild and the rescued man.

"Put them in the jail, where they were the other night," said Wild, "and see to it this time that they don't get out."

Liddle roomed with our three friends at the tavern that night.

The next morning when the train came along there was as big a crowd as there had been the day before at the depot.

Lige Becker and his followers expected more trouble about the name of the station.

And the railroad official who had been kidnapped by the railroad robbers was there.

That was quite enough to draw a crowd.

The rest of the railroad men had gone back to Ogden.

But when the train pulled in a crowd got off.

They had with them a new sign bearing the name of Roseville.

"Mr. Liddle," said Wild, "will you do me a favor?"

"Anything you ask, Young Wild West," was the reply.

"Well, just tell the railroad men that the name of this depot is going to be Jig Water."

Liddle had heard about the row from our friends.

He now showed himself to the railroad people.

"Gentlemen," said he, bowing to them, "on the strength of my release from captivity, I am going to name this railroad depot. I rather think I have the power to do it when it comes to the point.

"What's ther name you're goin' ter give it?" called out Lige Becker, showing his teeth.

"Jig Water!"

He was picked up bodily and carried around by the pleased settlers the moment they realized what he said.

It was now settled about the name of the station.

The train remained a long while at the depot that morning, too.

The fifteen thousand dollars was aboard, and a man had been instructed to throw it off at the place designated in the note written by Liddle.

But now the bag was opened and ten thousand dollars counted out and passed to our hero.

Wild took the money because he felt that he had earned it.

The two prisoners were brought over from the jail, and as they were being taken aboard the train Wild stepped up to Captain Leather and said:

"I want the money you took from Liddle's family yesterday morning."

The villain told him in which pocket he would find it, so Wild took it out, no one objecting.

Instead of going on for the regular run the train backed for Ogden that morning.

The new sign went with it and the one Cheyenne Charlie made remained on the station.

There is little more to tell.

Wild gave Mark Little the money he had received from the railroad robber, and then the old man hitched up his wagon, and, getting his belongings and his wife and daughter in it, started for Wyoming, declaring that he was not going to become a Mormon.

Wild and his partners went back to Weston, satisfied that they had experienced some lively work in Utah.

THE END.

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